CHINESE CHESS

for beginners

象棋

The Ishi Press

VISIT…

Chinese Chess for Beginners

by
Sam Sloan

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Acknowledgments

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Mr. Leung Lee Shing first encouraged me to write this book back in 1985, and even offered me the services of his secretary. At that time, I could not find a publisher. However, the tremendous expansion of Chinese chess during the past four years has created a demand for this book. I met with Mr. Leung again recently in Beijing and Singapore and he gave me more ideas which I incorporated into this book.

I met Mr. Liu Guo Bin for the first time in Beijing in 1985. He was the first important personality in Chinese chess I ever met and he gave me a list of names and addresses of other persons around the world to contact, including Mr. Leung. However, the most important thing which Mr. Liu Guo Bin did for me was that he arranged an invitation to the October, 1988 Seven Stars Cup Chinese Chess Tournament in Beijing, through which I met all of the other important personalities in Chinese chess. That trip to Beijing has directly, or at least indirectly, resulted in this book.

I want to thank Chinese chess grandmasters Liu Da Hua, Li Lai Chen, Hu Long Hua and Xie Si Ming for actually sitting down at the board with me and spending time showing me things about Chinese chess. In particular, Grandmaster Xie Si Ming (the only one of the above who can speak English) gave me basic instruction and even analyzed my adjourned games, helping me to gain some much needed tournament victories. A big percentage of the ideas presented in this book were given to me by Xie Si Ming and the other above named grandmasters. I view my own contribution as one of reformulating the ideas of these Chinese chess grandmasters and presenting them in a way that a player of international chess can appreciate.

I must thank Mr. Robert Looi and the persons connected with the Singapore Chinese Chess Association, whose names would fill an entire page of this book if only I could remember them all, for the hospitality accorded at the December, 1988 Asian Cup Chinese Chess Championship. Almost every strong player of Chinese chess in the world was either there or at the previous tournament in Beijing.

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However, the biggest thanks of all must go to Paul Lam, Wong Ming and Henry Fok, who provided the money and financial sponsorship which made the above mentioned Chinese chess events possible.

Chapter One

The World of Chinese Chess

When you think of chess, you probably think of the game well known and widely played in Europe and the Americas, the game of Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov. We will call this game *international chess*. Few Americans and Europeans realize that this is just one of many actively played varieties of the game of chess.

There is also, for example, Japanese chess, known as *shogi* in Japan. There is further Korean chess (*chong-ki*), Thai chess (*makrook*) and Indian chess (*shatranj*). However, the most popular among all the members of this family of games is Chinese chess, also known as *shiang-chi* and spelled *xiangqi* in the Pinyin spelling system, which is based upon the Mandarin dialect of Chinese.

Chinese chess is not merely a regional game. Unlike shogi, which is played almost exclusively in Japan, and makrook, which is played almost exclusively in Thailand, Chinese chess is a truly international game. The reason for this is that the Chinese people are truly international people. Wherever you go in the world, even to a small village in a remote location, you will always be able to find at least one Chinese person and that one person will al-

most always know how to play Chinese chess.

This may seem to be an outlandish statement. However, there is a way to prove whether this is true or not. Go into any Chinese restaurant anywhere in the world. Show a Chinese chess set to the waiter or manager. Perhaps he will insist that he does not know how to play. Nevertheless, be persistent. Set up the pieces to the normal starting position. Ask the individual in question to make a move. Finally, perhaps reluctantly, he will reach over. Almost certainly he will pick up one of the cannons and move it to the center line. Eureka! Your new opponent not only knows how to move the pieces legally, but he also knows a little opening theory as well.

In fact, there is simply no such thing as a Chinese man who does not know how to play Chinese chess. The game is embedded in the Chinese culture. Chinese children learn how to play it at the same age when children in other cultures are learning how to play tic-tac-toe. Consider that there are more than one billion people of Chinese origin in the world today. Excluding small children (there are lots of Chinese small children) this means that more than a half billion people in the world know how to play Chinese chess. This statistic makes Chinese chess easily the most popular game of any kind in the entire world.

One amazing thing about this is that most people who are not Chinese have never even heard of Chinese chess.

That, however, is not going to last much longer. Throughout most of their history, the Chinese people have been rather impoverished. Now, times are changing. The Chinese are becoming rich. Three of the so-called 'four economic tigers' of Asia, namely Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, are Chinese. They have become major factors in the world economy. As the Chinese people themselves are becoming rich, they are naturally going to spend money on their game: Chinese chess.

Three Hong Kong millionaires, Henry Fok, Paul Lam and Wong Ming, have already put a considerable amount of money into Chinese chess and have promised to put in more. Henry Fok has offered a prize of one half million dollars to the first non-Chinese person ever to win a major tournament of Chinese chess ahead of a Chinese grandmaster. He has also indicated that he may increase that prize to one million dollars in the future, plus make the conditions for winning the prize less difficult.

Paul Lam and Wong Ming are both master strength players of Chinese chess. Paul Lam holds the distinction of being perhaps the only person in the world to be a master of all three of the major games: chess, go (*wei-chi*) and Chinese chess. He has been rated 2250 by the World Chess Federation and is ranked as a 5-dan player of go. He and Wong Ming, who is one of the strongest players of Chinese chess in Hong Kong, have together provided the seed capital for the founding of the World Chinese

Chess Federation.

In Singapore, the Guinness Company has pledged a considerable amount of money for the sponsorship of international Chinese chess tournaments. In Bangkok, the Surathip Group, the national liquor company, is committed to the sponsorship of Chinese chess events. Taiwan has obtained commercial sponsorship for big Chinese chess tournaments. China has been sponsoring the 'Seven Stars Cup' series of annual international Chinese chess tournaments.

Where have you been while all this has been going on? In reality, this has all happened so suddenly that few people who are not Chinese even know about this. Any Chinese chess event of any consequence will have little difficulty in attracting 500 to 1000 spectators per day. This is the reason that commercial sponsors are interested. Even a World Chess Olympiad, with 107 nations represented, will not get that many spectators. A Chinese chess event will get both front page coverage and probably a full page of specialized coverage in the local Chinese newspaper. However, it will probably not get even one line of mention in the English language press.

Why is that? Actually, most English language newspaper editors have never even heard of Chinese chess. When they hear the name, they think that it must be go. Isn't it strange that the most popular game in the entire world is a game which hardly anybody who is not

Chinese has even heard of?

Actually, it all comes down to a simple question of money. Go became a prestige game because the Japanese played it and the Japanese had money. Therefore, everybody wanted to learn how to play go. When the Chinese people were poor, Chinese chess was merely a sidewalk game played by old men and young boys on the street. Nobody paid any attention to it. Suddenly, the Chinese have become rich. Now, just a few people are starting to take notice. This is why a British company like Guinness, with hardly a single Chinese person working for it, has suddenly started spending large amounts of money sponsoring Chinese chess tournaments.

Want to Pick up an Easy Half Million Dollars by Playing Games in Your Spare Time?

Henry Fok has offered to give a prize of one half million dollars to the first non-Chinese person to win a major tournament in Chinese chess. By the way, he has the money to pay. This sounds easy enough. All you have to do is beat a few Chinese at their own game.

Basically, all you really have to do is beat a certain Mr. Hu Long Hua (Hu Rong Hua in the Pinyin spelling system) at a game of chess. This should not be any problem. Mr. Hu is a friendly fellow.

Actually, it will probably never be done. Hu Long Hua is the Bobby Fischer of Chinese chess. He won the cham-

pionship of China (which in effect was the world championship) in 1960 when he was only 15 years old. He is still considered to be the best player in the world. Nobody who is not Chinese is likely to beat him any time soon.

Still, it is possible to dream. One player who is given a remote chance is Robert Hübner of West Germany, a doctor of papyrology. Dr. Hübner is rated around 2600 by the World Chess Federation and is consistently ranked among the top 50 chess players in the world. He often boycotts events organized by the World Chess Federation. This gives him some extra time to play Chinese chess. The only problem is that he is not very strong yet. Although he finished second in a tournament in England in 1988, he still has a way to go to reach any sort of international Chinese standard. However, being one of the top chess players in the world suggests that Dr. Hübner might have the raw talent to become a top player at Chinese chess.

Besides Dr. Hübner, it is just about possible to count on the fingers of one hand those players who are recognized in the world of international chess and who have also tried Chinese chess. Larry Kaufman, an international chess master living in Miami, Florida, with a chess rating of around 2450, became quite a reasonable player of Chinese chess in just a few months time in 1985, but then abruptly gave it up to concentrate on computer chess, with respect to which he is now one of the world's leading authorities. A player named Winston Williams from Singapore has held a rating of around 2220 by the World Chess Federation and also plays a fair game of Chinese chess. There is also this author. Needless to say, none of the above are any threat whatever to Hu Long Hua.

In recognition of this, Henry Fok is talking about lowering the standard required to win the prize and increasing the money to one million dollars. If he is serious about this, it could become interesting. Hu Long Hua may be virtually unbeatable, but it might be feasible for a non-Chinese person to become one of the best 100 players of Chinese chess in the world, for example.

Since the publication of the first edition of this book, an important new development has taken place. Xie Jun, who got her big start as a street player of Chinese chess at the age of 10, has won the Woman's World Chess Championship, decisively defeating Maya Chiburdanidze of the Soviet Union. Only the author of this book predicted that result. It will be noted that on page 138 of the first edition of this book, published in 1988, it was stated that Xie Jun was 'easily' one of the ten best female players in the world. However, nobody believed this, as Xie Jun was not even in the rating list of the top 500 at the time.

However, this is only the beginning, as three other Chinese girls have since reached the candidates finals of the top eight. It can be predicted that the Chinese women will completely take over and monopolize the Woman's World Chess Championship from now on.

Chapter Two

How to Play Chinese Chess

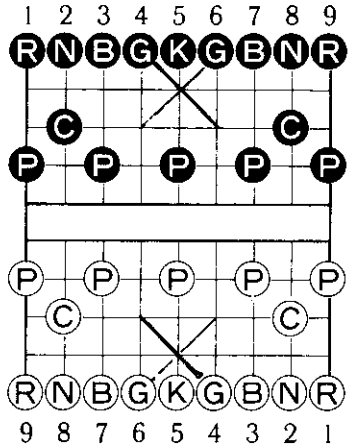
Chinese chess is a game played on a board consisting of 9 by 10 lines. It has a rook, a knight, a king and pawns, all of which move in the same way or a similar way to those same pieces in international chess. It does not have a queen. Instead, it has a cannon, a guard and an elephant (sometimes called a bishop) all of which have no real equivalent in international chess. The object of the game is to checkmate or stalemate the enemy king.

Chinese chess is a relative of international chess. The Chinese authorities in Beijing claim that some predecessor form of the game was played as early as the first centuries B.C. This is much earlier than any record of chess existing in either India or Arabia. However, international chess and Chinese chess clearly share a common origin.

At the same time, there are major differences between the two games. Chinese chess is played on lines and points rather than on squares. It has a river in the middle of the board and an imperial palace on each side of the board. The king and his guards are never allowed to leave the imperial palace, like the emperor in not so ancient China, as those who have seen the movie *The Last Emperor* will have learned.

The Initial Set-Up

Part of the proof that Chinese chess and international chess are just variations of the same basic game lies in the fact that in spite of a number of differences, the pieces are set up in basically the same way. For example, in both games, the king is in the center, the rook in the corner and the knight is next to the rook. After that comes the bishop, although the bishop in Chinese chess is a much weaker piece than the bishop in international chess. Actually, the bishop in Chinese chess moves the same way as the bishop (which was then called the elephant) moved in the original Arab and Indian forms of international chess. The present bishop and queen used in international chess were both innovations introduced in Italy in about 1497.



Dia. 1. The initial set-up

Whereas there is one queen in international chess, there are two guards in Chinese chess. These also move like the equivalent piece in historical Arab and Indian chess. For that reason, at the start of the game, there is a row of nine pieces on the back rank in Chinese chess, as opposed to only eight pieces in international chess.

Chinese chess has only five pawns to each side. These start on the fourth rank, not on the second, and have gaps in between them.

There is one piece which is much different from any piece which exists in international chess. That is called the cannon. It gives a lot of trouble to any experienced player of international chess who tries to take up Chinese chess. In the initial position, the cannon sort of hangs in mid-air on the third rank of the board.

How the Pieces are Named.

Although there are seven different types of pieces, no agreement has yet been reached as to what names to call them. Westerners tend to use the same names which are familiar to them from international chess. Chinese tend to use the word which is the direct translation of the name of that piece from Chinese into English. Thus, the piece which starts in the corner and has the power to move and capture vertically and horizontally is called the 'rook' by Westerners, but the Chinese usually call it either the 'chariot' or the 'car'. The reason for this is that the

Chinese character for that piece is also the word for automobile in modern Chinese. Therefore, do not call the police if your Chinese opponent in Chinese chess suddenly announces that he is going to take your car.

Similarly, almost all of the other pieces in Chinese chess have two or three possible names. The knight can be called the horse, the bishop can be called the elephant, the guard can be called the assistant, the cannon can be called the gunner or the gun, the pawn can be called the footsoldier and the king can be called the general. Any new player will just have to get used to hearing these and other possible names for the various pieces.

The Asian Chinese Chess Association, of which twelve countries are members, previously adopted the convention of calling the pieces by the following names: chariot, horse, elephant, assistant, gunner, pawn and king. In a meeting at Kunming, China in 1990, they dropped chariot in favor of rook and gunner in favor of cannon. However, we will call the pieces by the names rook, knight, bishop, guard, cannon, pawn and king.

The Pieces and their Movements

Each player has a total of 16 pieces, of seven different types. There are five pawns, two rooks, two knights, two bishops, two guards, two cannons and one king in each of the opposing armies. They move from one intersection of lines to another. Their moves are as follows:

ROOK – moves any number of unobstructed points left, right, forward or backward. In other words, it moves exactly like a rook in international chess.

KNIGHT – moves one point left, right, forward or backward plus one point further diagonally right or left in the same direction. In other words, it moves exactly the same as the knight in international chess. However, there is one big difference. **The knight in Chinese chess cannot jump.** For example, if there is another piece one point directly in front of the knight, it will not be able to move forward.

BISHOP – moves exactly two points diagonally, but cannot jump and cannot cross the river. Therefore, there are only seven possible points which a bishop can occupy.

GUARD – moves exactly one point diagonally, but cannot leave the imperial palace. There are only five possible points which a guard can occupy.

KING – moves exactly one point left, right, forward or backward. The king cannot leave the imperial palace. Unlike the king in international chess, the king in Chinese chess cannot move diagonally. A rule of utmost importance is that **the two kings are not allowed to face each other across the board.** In other words, if the two enemy kings are on the same line, there must be at least one other piece in between them. This rule is important to remember because the king often takes part in a checkmating attack.

CANNON – moves like a rook but captures by jumping. This is the hardest piece for a player of international chess to learn. In order for the cannon to capture an enemy piece, there must be another piece in between, called a 'gun mount', which the cannon 'fires' over. The gun mount can belong to either side.

PAWN – moves and captures by moving one point forward. After the pawn has crossed the river, it acquires the power to move and capture one point to either the left or right. In Chinese, this is called a 'river-crossing pawn'. Unlike the pawn in international chess, the pawn in Chinese chess moves and captures in the same way. Also unlike the pawn in international chess, it cannot move two points forward on the first move.

Colors of the Pieces

In official sets used in recognized tournaments, the pieces are colored red and black. Red moves first. However, sets used by the general public use a wide variety of colors. For example, on some sets the pieces are blue and green. Almost any color will do. There is also no convention about which side moves first. In informal games, Black moves first almost as often as Red.

Shape of the Pieces

The Chinese do not use figurine pieces. In other words, the knight is not shaped like a horse. Instead, the pieces consist of flat disks with Chinese characters written on them. Even here, there is no uniformity. On pieces used in mainland China, the Chinese character used on the red

side will generally be a little bit different from the Chinese character on the same piece used by the black side. However, the Chinese character for the bishop is completely different for the opposing sides. The red bishop uses the Chinese character for 'minister' whereas the black bishop uses the Chinese character for 'elephant'. However, in the spoken language, the two words are pronounced in the same way.

This practice does not cause as much confusion as you might imagine. More than that, if the set gets old and the paint wears off, you will still know which piece belongs to which side, because of the different character used.

In the official sets designed by the Asian Chinese Chess Association, the red pieces and the equivalent black pieces are indicated by exactly the same Chinese characters. This is supposed to make it easy for non-Chinese to take up the game.

Many experiments have been made over the years using figurine pieces like those in international chess. The purpose of these experiments has been to get more Westerners interested in Chinese chess. These experiments have failed, however, because most Westerners, having once learned the game, prefer to use pieces with Chinese characters written on them rather than figurine pieces. One person in Hong Kong has even tried moving the pieces off of the points and onto squares by creating a board of 9 by 10 squares, without success.

The Asian Chinese Chess Association has adopted a standard Chinese chess set to be used in all official competition. On one side of each piece is the Chinese character of the piece and under it is the name of the piece in English. For example, the knight has the Chinese character for 'horse' on it and under that the English word 'horse'. The pieces can also be turned over, if either player wishes, and on the other side are pictures of the piece in question, such as a horse or an elephant.

This set seems to represent the best solution to this difficult problem. There are only seven Chinese chess characters to remember, plus the name is also written in English. This makes these pieces rather easy to comprehend. Under the official rules, either player has the right to insist that all the pieces be turned over and the side with pictures of horses and elephants used. However, it is noteworthy that so far there is no known case of any player having asked for this. It seems that everyone feels that the Chinese characters are easier to remember.

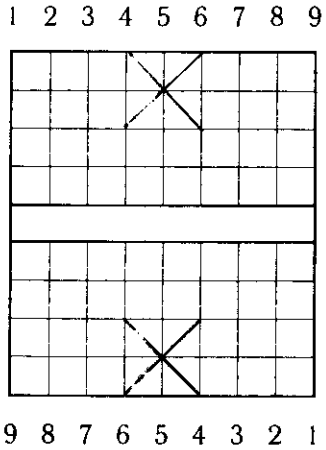
Most readers probably do not have a Chinese chess set. If you cannot find a set, ask your local gamestore to carry some. Good quality sets are available from Ishi Press International, 76 Bonaventura Drive, San Jose, CA 95134 and 20 Burges Place, London NW1 0TE. Meanwhile, we have included and a set of paper pieces at the back of the book. You can cut these out and draw a board on a piece of paper.

The Board

Diagram 2 shows the bare board. Notice that there is an empty sector in the middle called the river. It simply divides the board into half. It only directly affects two pieces. The bishop is not allowed to cross the river. Also, the pawn acquires the power to move sideways after it has crossed it. The major pieces, the rook, the knight and the cannon, can move freely back and forth across the river.

The second feature is the imperial palace. This is a section of 3 by 3 points on either side of the board. It is marked by an 'X'.

Neither the king nor his guards are allowed to leave the imperial palace.

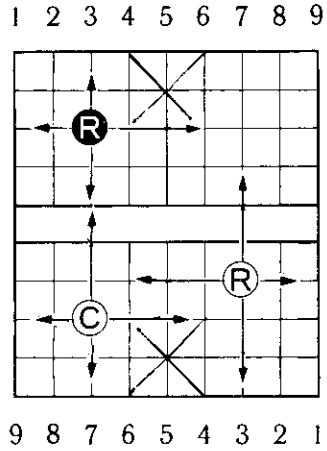


Dia. 2. The Board

There are also other markings on the board. These vary from board to board. Usually, they show where the pawns and the cannons are initially placed. These markings are just to help the player orient himself, like the white and black colored squares used in international chess.

The Initial Set-Up and Piece Movements

Diagram 1 on page 9 shows the initial set-up. Moving from the corners to the middle are the rooks, knights, bishops, guards and king, in that order. In front are five pawns. Below and between them are two cannons.

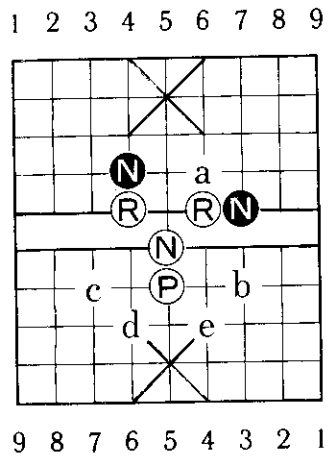


Dia. 3

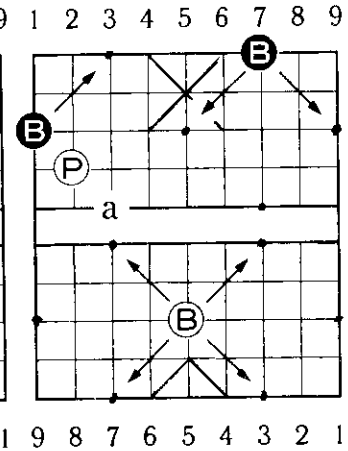
Diagram 3 shows the movements of the rook and the

cannon. Note, however, that the cannon captures differently, by jumping.

Diagram 4 shows the movement of the knight. **It is of great importance to note that the knight cannot jump.** Thus, the red knight here can move to points 'a', 'b' and 'c' but not to 'd' or 'e'. Also, the red knight can capture either of the two black knights shown in the diagram, but the black knights cannot capture the red knight. Both black knights are blocked by other pieces.



Dia. 4

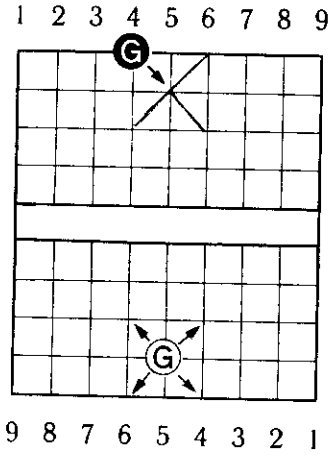


Dia. 5

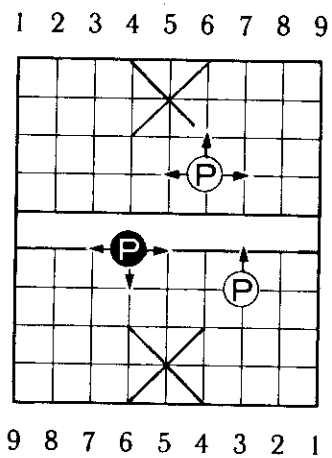
Diagram 5 shows the movement of the bishop. Since the bishop moves exactly two points diagonally and cannot cross the river, **there are only seven possible points which the bishop can occupy.** Please work this out until

you understand this important fact. The points to which the bishop can move are marked by dots. Note that the black bishop cannot move to point 'a' because it is blocked by a pawn. A bishop is a purely defensive piece, since it cannot cross the river and attack the enemy king.

Diagram 6 shows the movements of the guards. Since the guard can only move one point diagonally and cannot leave the imperial palace, **there are only five possible points on which the guard can ever land.** Again, please work out the reason for this. Each guard starts in the corner of the imperial palace and therefore has only one legal move. A guard in the center of the imperial palace has four possible legal moves. A guard is a purely defensive piece. It guards the king.



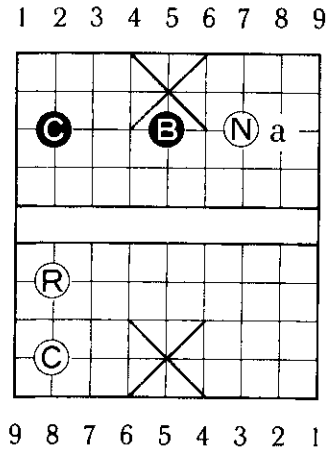
Dia. 6



Dia. 7

Diagram 7 shows the movements of the pawns. Note that a pawn that has crossed the river has three possible legal moves. Such a pawn is strong and dangerous to the enemy pieces, whereas a pawn which has not yet crossed the river is almost worthless. Also note that a pawn can never move backwards.

Diagram 8 gives examples of the capturing move of the cannon. Note that the cannon can capture the enemy knight but cannot move to point 'a'. The two cannons can capture each other but cannot capture the rook.



Dia. 8

Object of the Game

The object of the game in Chinese chess is to win the enemy king either through checkmate or stalemate. A

stalemate wins the game, just like a checkmate. In other words, unlike in international chess, **a stalemate is not a draw but rather is a win for the side giving stalemate.**

Draws

The draw rule is the most complicated rule in Chinese chess and in fact has not yet been formalized. The reason for this is that perpetual check and perpetual repetition of moves are quite common possibilities in Chinese chess. In fact, **if players were allowed to force a draw by perpetual repetition of position, as they are in international chess, then almost every fairly evenly contested game of Chinese chess would end in a draw.**

As a result, perpetual check is almost absolutely prohibited. Generally, the player giving perpetual check is required to make some other move instead. The catch is about this word 'generally'. If the player can prove that he is being forced by his opponent to give perpetual check, then the game might be ruled a draw.

An even more difficult case arises when the position is being repeated because one of the players keeps attacking an enemy piece or else keeps threatening checkmate, without actually giving check. In such cases, the player who is forcing the other to move will be required to make a different move and the game will continue.

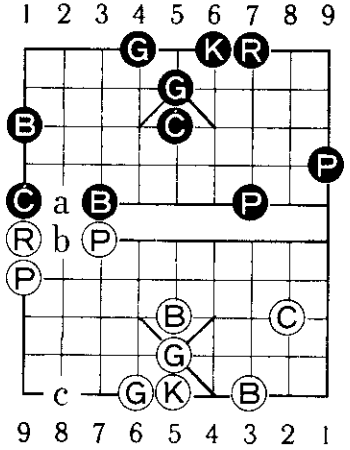
In official tournaments there are sometimes disputes about this and an arbiter has to be called. What the arbiter tries to do is to determine the guilt. In other words, there is usually one player, usually the player with the weaker position on the board, who keeps attacking his opponent and forcing the opponent to move back and forth. In that case, the guilty player will be ordered by the arbiter to change his sequence of moves. However, sometimes it happens that both players are attacking each other. In that case, the game is a draw.

This is such a complicated subject that it is beyond the scope of this book. The Hong Kong Chinese Chess Association has published a book of disputed positions and what the ruling of the arbiter was and the reasoning behind the ruling in various cases. Also, the Asian Chinese Chess Association and the China Chinese Chess Association are in disagreement concerning some finer points of these rules.

Fortunately, these disputed cases are fairly rare and a beginning player does not need to be much concerned about them. However, Dia. 9 is intended to be a rudimentary example of how this problem might arise.

In Dia. 9 (next page), the player of the black pieces has an overwhelming material advantage. Therefore, the player of the red pieces would be quite happy to get a draw. Right now, the black cannon is being attacked by the red rook. The only place where the cannon can move and avoid capture is to point 'a'. However, in that case, then the red rook will move to point 'b' and attack the

cannon again. The cannon will have no choice but to move back to its present position. The rook will also move back and the position will be repeated.



Dia. 9

This case appears to be fairly clear cut. The rook is clearly forcing the cannon to move back and forth. The cannon is merely trying to escape. Therefore, the side with the rook is guilty of trying to force a draw and consequently should be ordered to make another move.

But wait! When the cannon moves to 'a', it just so happens that coincidentally it threatens to move to point 'c', which is checkmate. There is only one defense to checkmate. That is for the red rook to move to point 'b'. If the arbiter rules that Red is not allowed to make this move, it

is just like passing a death sentence on Red. Therefore, the arbiter must rule that Red can move to 'b'. The cannon then moves back to its present position, where it does not threaten mate. When Red also moves back, Black again complains to the arbiter.

What will the arbiter now rule? In this particular position, he will probably rule that Red must make a different move, which will result in a win for Black. However, nobody can say for sure, because the authorities are not in full agreement on this kind of situation. Fortunately, it does not happen often enough to be of any great concern to the reader at this stage.

Notation

The Chinese use a descriptive system of notation to record their games. Under this system, a move is described with words like: 'Cannon on the second line moves over to the fifth line.' This, incidentally, is regarded as the best first move for Red in Chinese chess. These words are reduced to symbols. Using these symbols, this move is written 'C2.5' or possibly 'C2=5'. The vertical lines are numbered from 1 to 9 from each player's right. Thus, the first line for the player of the red pieces is the same as the ninth line for the player of the black pieces.

Other legal first moves by the cannon include 'cannon on second advances four', which is written 'C2+4' and 'cannon on second retreats one', which is written 'C2-1'.

Rook moves and king moves are written in the same way. However, the recording of knight moves is a bit tricky. The initial knight move might be written 'knight on second advances to third' or, in symbols, 'N2+3'. If one looks at the position on the board, one will find that there is only one point on the third line to which the knight on the second line can legally advance. Because of the way the knight moves, this will always be true. Incidentally, we are following the convention from international chess in which a knight is designated by the letter 'N'. This avoids confusion with the 'K' for king.

Sometimes it will happen that a player has two of the same kind of piece on the same line. In that case, the move of the piece will be generally be recorded as for example "front knight advances to six" which is symbolized as 'FN+6' or "back rook over to nine" which is written as 'BR.9' or 'BR=9'.

On rare occasions in the endgame or in composed problems, it happens that there are three pawns on the same line. Then, a move might be recorded as 'middle pawn over to five' or 'MP=5'. People who are interested in such things have found ingenious ways to record the moves in even more complicated situations, such as five pawns on the same line. However, these cases never really arise in actual play.

It should be observed that any move in Chinese chess can be written with exactly four characters, never more

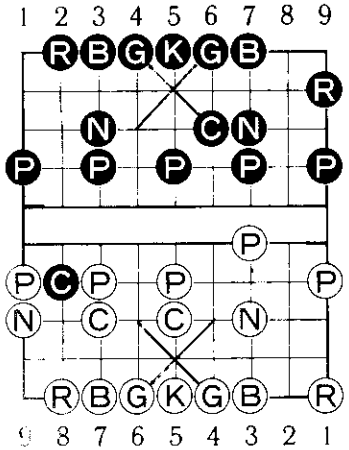
and never less. This conforms to the Chinese system of orderliness.

One of the first things which just about every Westerner does when he decides to take up Chinese chess is to invent his own algebraic system for recording the moves. Under this sort of system, the vertical lines go from a to i and the horizontal lines go either from 0 to 9 or from 1 to 9 and then to 0. Thus, an initial knight move by Red might be recorded as 'Nh0-g2'. See if you can find this move on the board in the initial position. If you are having trouble, then you will understand why this sort of algebraic system has not been successful. As a hint, you should know that the same move is recorded under the Chinese system as 'N2+3'.

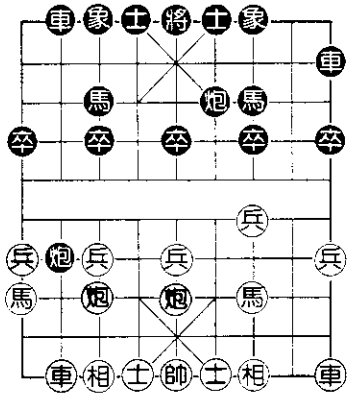
This is not to say that the Chinese notational system is all that wonderful. In every book on Chinese chess published in Chinese there are numerous recording errors. In fact, these errors are so numerous that they seem to appear in almost every published game. Part of the task in playing over a published game is figuring out what must have happened when a mistake appears in the score. The Chinese do not seem to consider this to be any sort of a problem. They seem to think that correcting mistakes is just a normal part of the process of playing over a published game.

Perhaps the Chinese should consider adopting an algebraic system to reduce the frequency of these type of

mistakes, just as international chess has finally done. However, for the moment, there are more than one hundred million Chinese who are used to the present system and it would be foolish for anyone to try to swim against the tide.



Dia. 10a



Dia. 10b

The Asian Chinese Chess Association has adopted the convention of using a dot rather than an equals sign to record a horizontal move. Therefore, the first move should be written 'C2.5' rather than 'C2=5'. However, just to be obstreperous, we again will not follow the official system, but rather will use equals. This seems to be more logical and consistent, since the mathematical symbols for plus and minus ('+' and '-') are also being used.

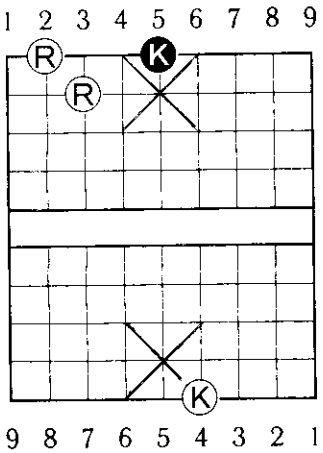
As a test, try making the following moves from the initial position in Chinese chess: 1. C2=5, N2+3; 2. N2+3, C8=6; 3. P3+1, N8+7; 4. N8+9, R9+1; 5. C8=7, R1=2; 6. R9=8, C2+4. By now, you should have reached the position in Dia. 10a. If you have done so successfully, then you have mastered the notational system in Chinese chess. By the way, this is a standard opening variation, so you have learned something by taking the time to play over these moves. Dia. 10b is the same position as will be found in a book published in Chinese. Note that in the opposing armies, the pawns, bishops and kings are different, whereas the rooks, cannons, knights and guards are the same. This diagram is from a book published in Singapore. These, in turn, are different from the 'official' pieces designated by the Asian Chinese Chess Association. In the official pieces, the red bishop is the same as the black bishop, for example. The purpose of the official pieces is to make it simpler for non-Chinese to understand.

Chapter Three

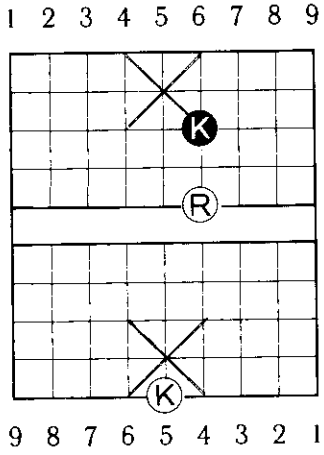
Checkmate and Stalemate

Now, we will move on quickly to examples of checkmate. Some of these examples will be a little bit hard for the beginning player, but it is important to understand this section.

We will start with an easy case. In Dia. 11, Black is in checkmate because his king cannot escape from the enemy rooks. This exact checkmate might occur in international chess.

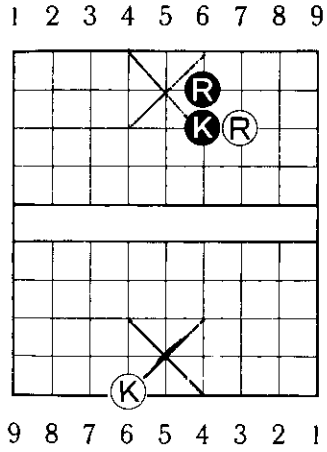


Dia. 11

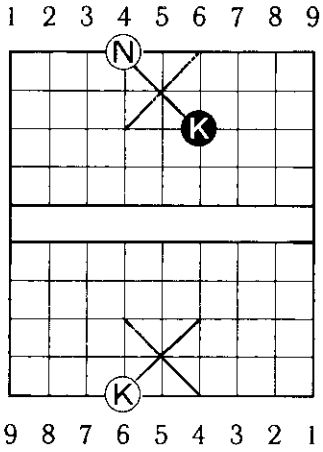


Dia. 12

Don't get overconfident. Diagram 12 is a much harder case. The black king is in check from the red rook. That is easy enough. However, the king cannot move to the right because it cannot leave the imperial palace. Also, it cannot move to the left because of the important rule that two kings can never face each other. Please remember this. This rule is so important that it will be repeated again. **The kings can never face each other.** Another way to explain the same idea is to say that the king moves like a rook when it comes to checking or capturing the enemy king.



Dia. 13

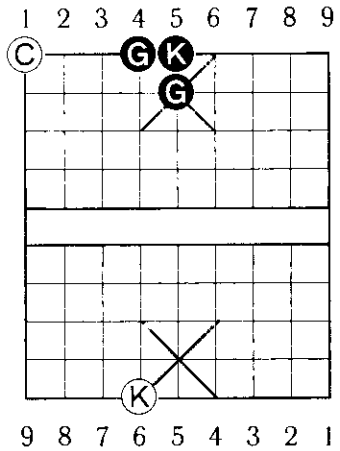


Dia. 14

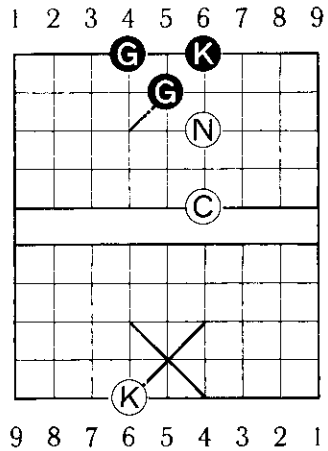
Diagram 13 is another hard case for the beginning player. The black king is in check from the red rook, but

it looks like the king can just capture the rook, or else move away. However, it cannot. The king cannot capture the rook because it cannot leave the imperial palace. Also, it cannot move away because it cannot move diagonally. The only escape point which the king might have is now occupied by its own rook.

Diagram 14 (preceding page) is an example of stalemate. It does not look like the game is over, but it is. The red knight attacks the only two points to which the black king might be able to move. Again, Red wins because Black has no legal move. Remember that **the king cannot move diagonally and cannot leave the palace.**



Dia. 15



Dia. 16

Diagram 15 is an example of checkmate by the cannon.

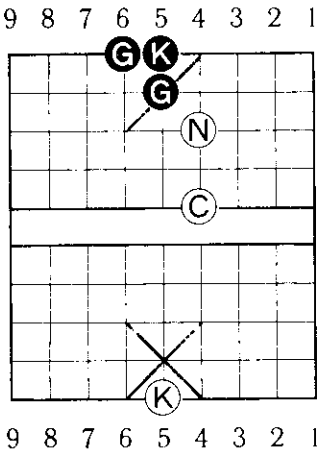
Remember that the cannon captures by jumping. In this case, it will jump over the guard and capture the enemy king. The only possible move of the guard is blocked by the other guard. It is important to observe how the guards have caused their own king to be checkmated. If either guard were removed, then it would not be checkmate. If the guard to the right of the king is removed, then it is not even check, because the cannon needs to have a gun mount to jump over in order to capture the king. Also, if the guard in front of the king is removed, then Black has two ways out of check. He can move the king forward or he can move the guard up. If you do not understand this, please study this diagram carefully, because this particular mate comes up all the time.

Diagram 16 is another common checkmate by the cannon. The king cannot move to the left because that point is attacked by the knight. It is important to note that the black guard can capture the red knight, but this does not affect the checkmate, because then the cannon will jump over the guard.

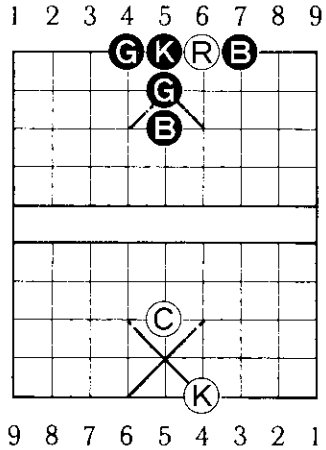
Diagram 17 (next page) is similar to Dia. 16 except that the black king is on a different point. Now, the guard cannot capture the knight because in that case the two enemy kings will face each other.

Diagram 18 (next page) is one of the most common and important checkmates in all of Chinese chess. Please study this diagram carefully. The red rook attacks the

black king. The black king cannot capture the red rook because then the two kings would face each other. The next point is important. The black guard cannot capture the red rook because in that case the red cannon would be checking the black king.



Dia. 17

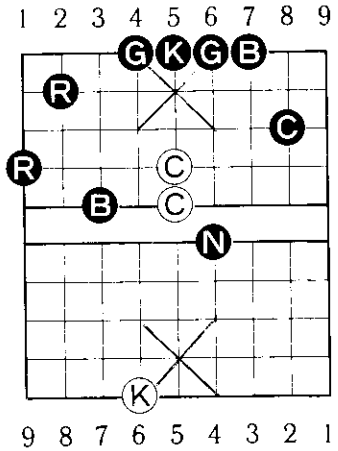


Dia. 18

Stare at Dia. 18 for as long as it takes for you to understand it. If you still don't get it, do not be concerned. Your opponents will be happy to demonstrate this particular checkmate to you hundreds of times until you get the hang of it.

Diagram 19 shows checkmate by two cannons. Again, it is important to understand why this is checkmate. Presently, the king is in check from the rear cannon, be-

cause the rear cannon can jump over the front cannon. However, in this diagram, Black has two bishops, two guards, a cannon and a rook, all of which can seem to move in front of the cannons and block the check. However, it is still checkmate because in that case the front cannon will be giving check. Also, the front cannon can be captured by the rook or the knight, but that will still not affect the checkmate.

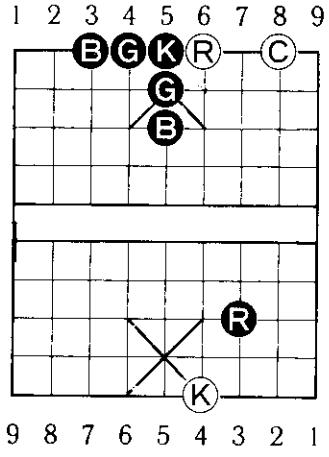


Dia. 19

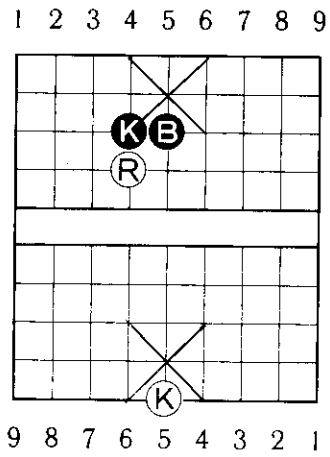
Examples of Checkmate

Diagrams 20 through 30 are all examples of mates. (From here on, we will consider both stalemates and checkmates to be simply mates, that is, wins). In each case, it is Black to move, but Black has no legal move. Please take as much time as you need and go through these diagrams one by one until you are sure that you understand why each one is mate. Remember that checkmate and stalemate ends the game, so there is nothing more important than to be able to recognize them.

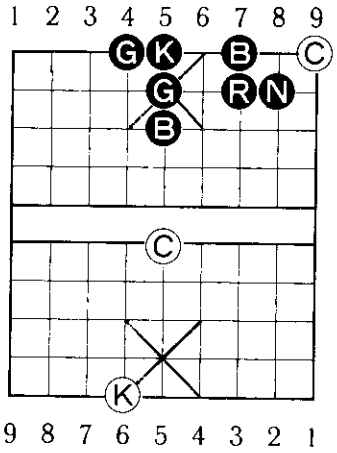
Examples of Mate



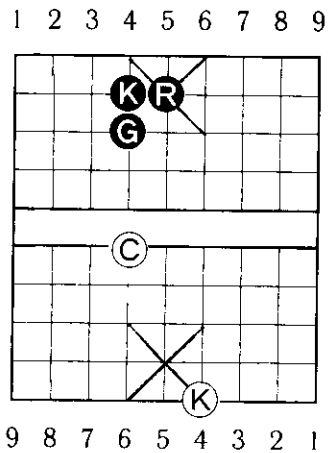
Dia. 20



Dia. 21

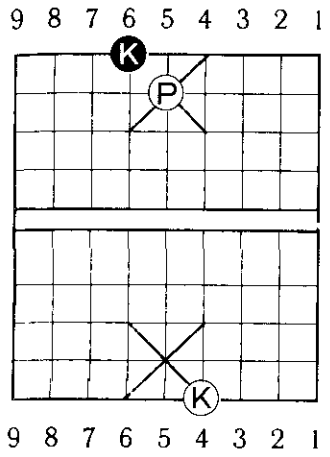


Dia. 22

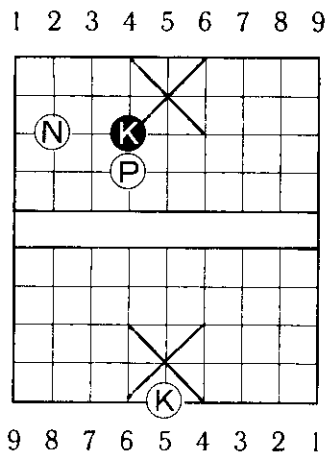


Dia. 23

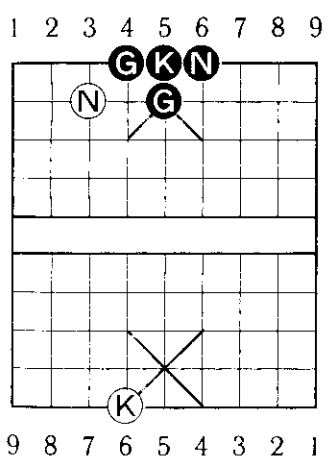
Examples of Mate



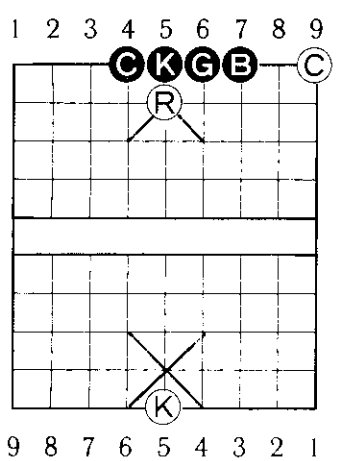
Dia. 24



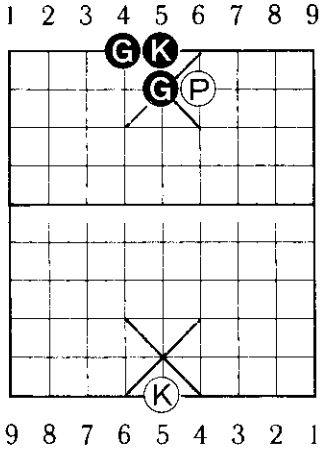
Dia. 25



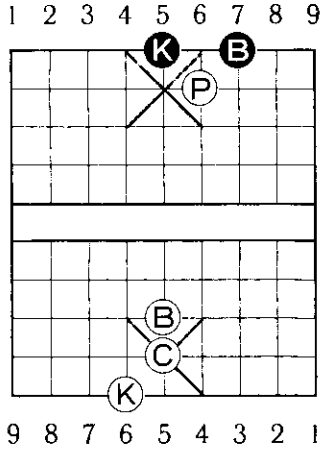
Dia. 26



Dia. 27

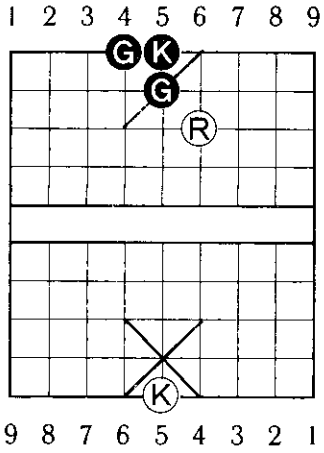


Dia. 28



Dia. 29

If you have completed your study of all of these diagrams, try setting up your own mating positions. Actually, there are not that many. The same mates tend to occur again and again. Perhaps you could create your own small library of possible checkmates (including stalemates). You will need to develop this skill of creating mating positions, because that is what you will be trying to do when you sit



Dia. 30

down against an opponent and play a real game.

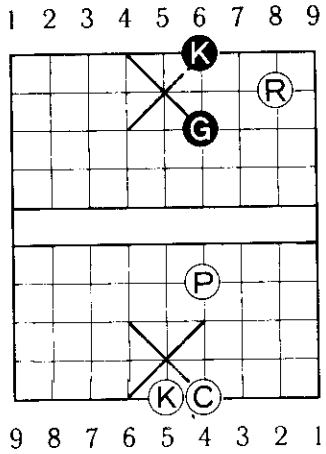
The fine art of checkmate is much more important in Chinese chess than it is in international chess. The reason for this is that in international chess, you generally try to win material or queen a pawn. Most of the time, you do not think about administering checkmate until you have already acquired overwhelming force.

In Chinese chess, if you win a whole bunch of material, you are probably doing something wrong. A player who is far ahead in material has probably already missed several mating possibilities. Also, the cannon tends to become weaker as the enemy pieces are removed from the board. Therefore, you need to concentrate primarily on how to mate your opponent, not on how to win material.

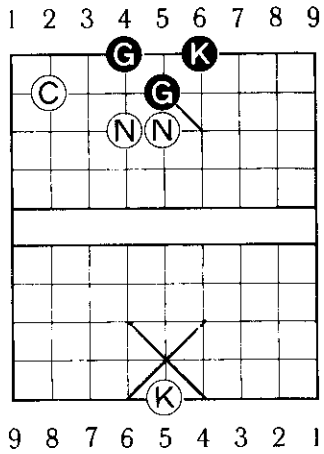
Quiz Number One

Diagrams 31 through 40 are Quiz Number One. You are asked to decide whether each position is mate or not. If the position is not mate, then Black has only one legal move. The answers start on page 42. If you do not score 100%, go back until you understand what you did wrong.

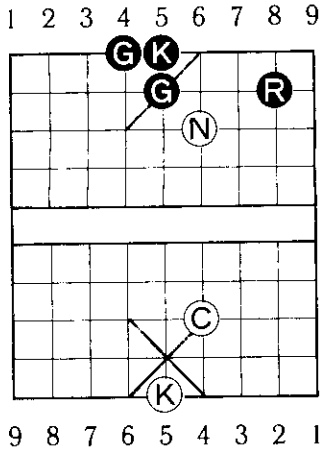
Quiz One. Is Black Mated?



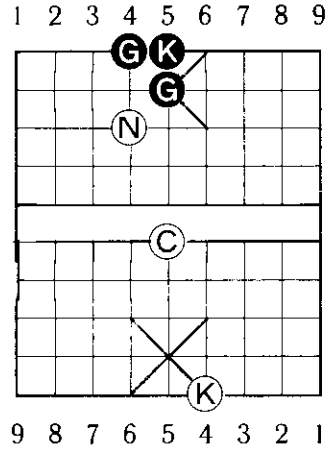
Dia. 31



Dia. 32

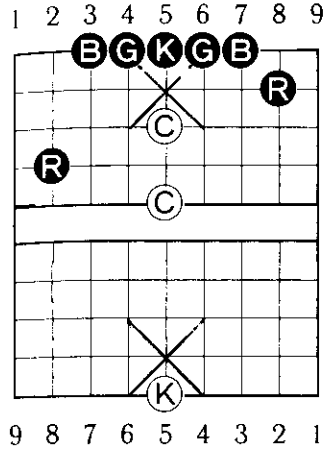


Dia. 33

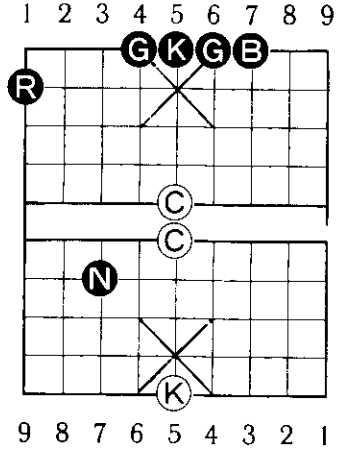


Dia. 34

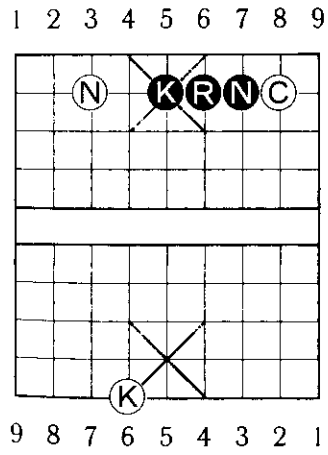
Quiz One. Is Black Mated?



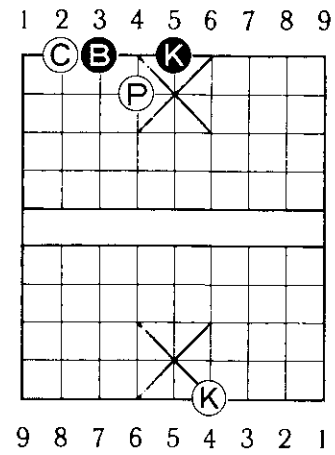
Dia. 35



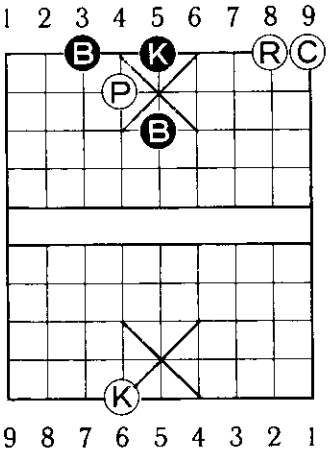
Dia. 36



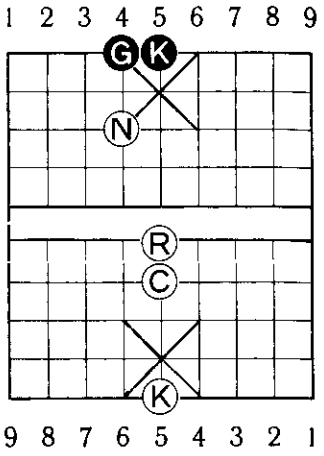
Dia. 37



Dia. 38



Dia. 39



Dia. 40

Answer To Quiz Number One (Diagrams 31 - 40)

31. This position is mate (by stalemate). The guard cannot retreat because of check by the cannon.

32. Also mate (by stalemate). The black guard cannot move, because the knight would capture the king. Note that the black king is not presently in check. The red knight, which would otherwise be checking the king, is blocked by the guard. Remember that the knight cannot jump.

33. This is not checkmate. Black has one legal move, R8 = 6, blocking the knight.

34. This is not checkmate. The guard simply captures the knight.

35. This is not checkmate. Black has one legal move: R2 = 5.

36. Not checkmate. Black plays N3-5, capturing the rear cannon.

37. Mate by stalemate. If Black moves the rook or the knight, then the cannon takes the king.

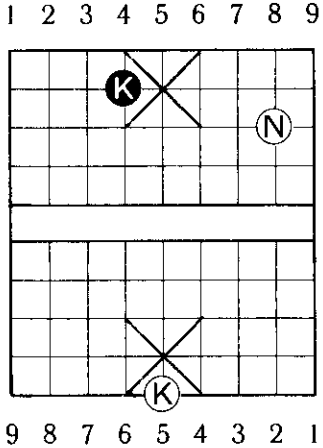
38. Not checkmate. Black's only move is B3 + 1.

39. Double check but not checkmate. Black plays B5-7.

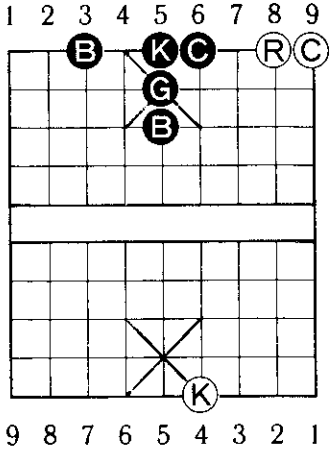
40. Not checkmate. Red has just played N5 + 6, giving triple check. The knight, rook and cannon are all checking at the same time. However, in spite of this, Black can merely step away with K5 = 6.

If you did score 100%, then you are ready for Quiz Number Two, which is Dias. 41 through 50. The question is whether Red has checkmate in one move and, if so, how. Again, you really need to score 100% on this quiz, or else study this section some more.

Quiz Number Two (Diagrams 41 to 50)
Does Red Have Mate in One?



Dia. 41



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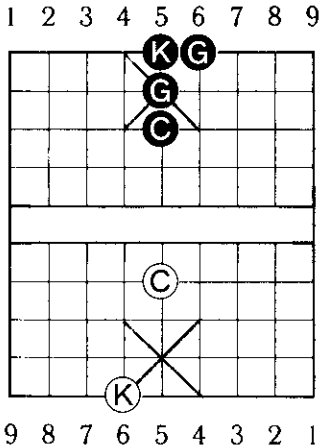
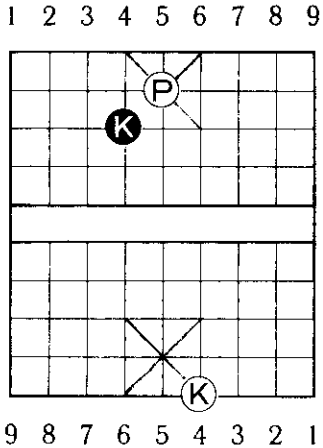
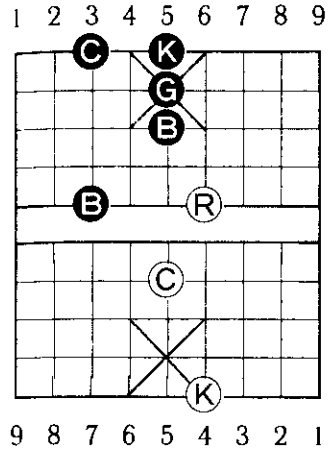


Dia. 43

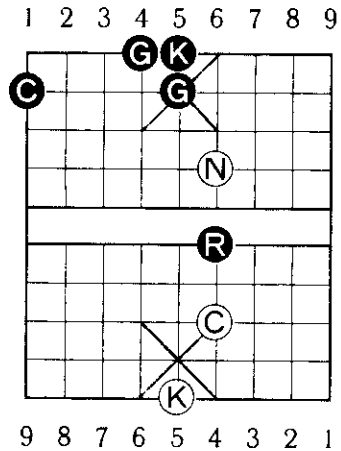


Dia. 44

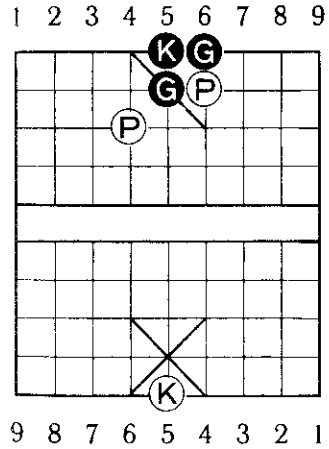
Quiz Two. Does Red Have Mate in One?



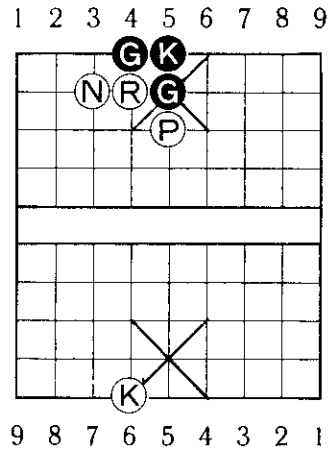
Dia. 45



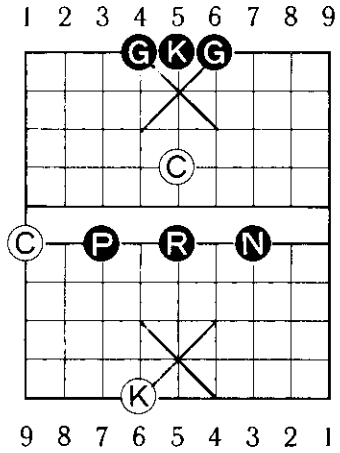
Dia. 46



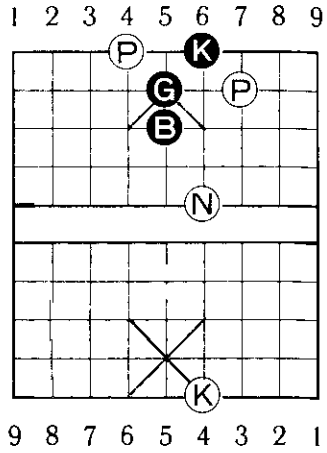
Dia. 47



Dia. 48



Dia. 49



Dia. 50

Answers to Quiz Number Two (Diagrams 41-50)

41. Mate in one. Red mates (by stalemate) with N2+4.

42. Red has checkmate with R2=4. If, instead, the red rook retreats, giving check by the cannon, then Black merely advances his cannon, breaking the check. This example comes up frequently.

43. Red stalemates with C5+3! Do not feel bad if you didn't get that one. This blocking theme is common in actual play.

44. Red stalemates with K4=5.

45. Not checkmate. If Red plays R4+4, Black surprises him by capturing the rook with C3=6.

46. Not checkmate. If Red checks with N4+3, Black blocks the knight with R6-4 or captures with C1=7. If Red plays N4+6 check, Black has C1=4.

47. Red has mate (by stalemate) with P6+1.

48. Red has checkmate with R6+1. However, if Red tries R6=5 double check, Black merely steps away with K5=6.

49. Not checkmate. If C9=5 capturing the rook with check, Black can play N7-5.

50. Not checkmate. It is not legal to move the knight because then the two kings will face each other. However, if Red's king were on the fifth line rather than the fourth line, Red would give stalemate with N4+5. N4+3 would not even be check because Red's knight would be blocked by his own pawn.

Chapter Four

A Sample Game

It is time to see what an actual game of Chinese chess looks like. Although the game selected is uncommonly short, it is a real game by Liu Chen Ching, a famous player in the 1950's.

1. P3+1. The most popular first move is cannon to the center. The move here is one of the major alternatives.

1. . . . . , C8=7. Black attacks the pawn right away.

2. C2=5, C2=5. Both players centralize their cannons.

3. N2+3. It would have been bad for Red to capture the pawn with C5+4 check. Black would simply defend against the check with G4+5 and then drive back the cannon with N2+3, gaining a lead in development. A pawn at this stage of the opening is almost worthless. It is much more important to develop the pieces quickly.

3. . . . . , N2+3. Similarly, it would have been quite terrible for Black to capture the pawn with C7+3. The reason that Black attacked this pawn with his cannon on the first move was not to try to win Red's third line pawn, but rather to pressure any piece which might happen to be behind that pawn. For example, if Red's right side knight had not come out on the previous move, Black could now have played 3. . . . . , P7+1; hoping for 4.

P3+1 ??, C7+7 check; 5. G4+5, C7=9 check winning the rook.

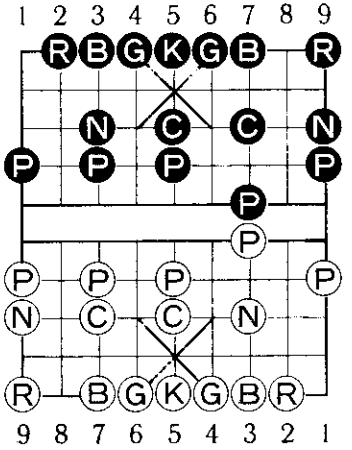
4. N8+9. Unlike in international chess, it is quite normal to place a knight on the edge like this.

4. . . . . , N8+9.

5. R1=2, R1=2. Placing the rooks on open files is also a common idea in international chess.

6. C8=7. Both Red and Black have now adopted a popular attacking formation which will be discussed in the next chapter. While it is normal to see one side or the other set up this formation, it is less common to see both players play it at the same time.

6. . . . . , P7+1. Black sacrifices a pawn and opens up the game radically. We have now reached Dia. 51.

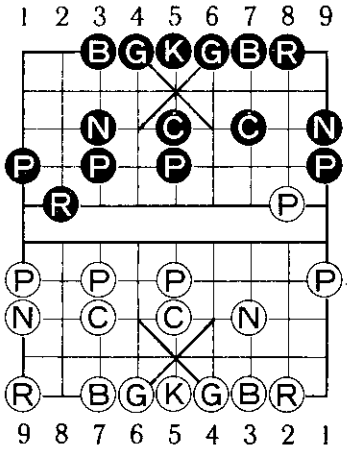


Dia. 51

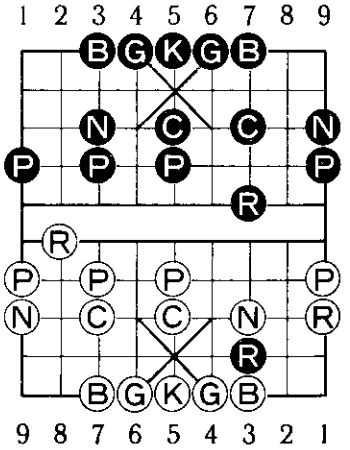
7. P3+1, R2+4. The purpose behind the sacrifice becomes apparent. Black intends to recapture the pawn with the rook, activating his pieces and putting strong pressure on Red's third line.

8. P3=2. Red could not advance the pawn with P3+1, because Black would simply capture it with the knight. You can see that the knight, in spite of being stuck on the edge of the board, is already playing an active role in the game.

8. . . . . , R9=8. It was probably a mistake for Red to try to save the pawn with the previous move. Now, Black has merely increased his lead in development and the pawn is still in jeopardy. We are now at Dia. 52.



Dia. 52



Dia. 53

9. R9=8. Red would have been better off doing this on the last move and then would have been one move ahead of his present development.

9. . . . . , R2=8. Now, Black has recovered the sacrificed pawn with a big lead in development.

10. R2=1. Terrible. Red apparently did not want to trade rooks because he felt that his right side would be undefended. However, this passive move is just hopeless.

10. . . . . , R8=7. Simultaneously attacking the knight with both the cannon and the rook.

11. R1+2. The only hope to defend everything. If Red tries N3-1, then Black traps the knight with R8+8. If instead 11. N3-5, Black pins the knight by capturing the pawn with C5+4, threatening to end the game with C7+7 check.

11. . . . . , R8+8. A fatal penetration.

12. R8+4, R8=7. Now, **Red resigns.** Black threatens to take the knight with the cannon with C7+5. The red knight is attacked by three pieces and defended by only two. Moreover, if the knight moves away with N3+4, Black captures the pawn with C5+4. After that, the two rooks plus the two cannons bearing down on the virtually undefended king guarantees any number of possible checkmates. The final position is found in Dia. 53.

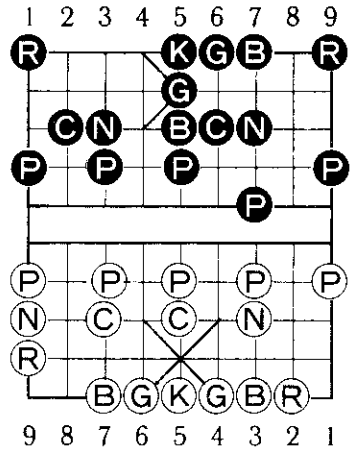
Chapter Five

How to Start the Game

It may seem a bit early to discuss opening theory, but it is no fun to try to play a game of Chinese chess, only to get crushed in the first eight moves. Fortunately, it is not too difficult to get a reasonable position out of the early opening. There are a number of formations which even grandmasters use and yet beginners can learn to set them up without much difficulty.

Diagram 54 is not intended to represent an actual playing position (although it could be) but rather shows two possible opening formations which Red and Black might well use. Each side has played six moves. Most likely, Red made his moves in the following order: C2=5, N2+3, R1=2, N8+9, R9+1 and C8=7. Meanwhile, Black has made the following moves: N2+3, C8=6, N8+7, B3+5, P7+1, G4+5.

Red has adopted a strong attacking formation which many grandmasters play. One cannon is on the center line, where it menaces the enemy king. The other is on the seventh line, where it is lined up against the enemy knight. Both of Red's knights have moved out. The rooks are also developed.



Dia. 54

Meanwhile, Black has adopted one of the strongest defensive formations known to exist in Chinese chess. This formation is known in Chinese as the "Fan Gong Ma". It is also the favorite of many grandmasters. The key to Black's defense is the cannon on Black's sixth line. At first, this cannon does not seem to be doing anything. Actually, it is the glue which holds Black's entire position together. The cannon directly protects the knight on Black's third line because of the bishop which acts as the gun mount between the cannon and the knight. The cannon also indirectly protects the knight on Black's seventh line, because it attacks the point beyond it on the eighth line. In other words, the red rook cannot now move up seven to attack the knight with the move R2+7, because then Black's cannon will capture Red's rook.

Note that Black has also moved up both one of his guards and one of his bishops. The two bishops now protect each other and the two guards also protect each other. One guard also protects the sixth line cannon. The presence of the bishop in the middle enables the cannon to defend the knight on Black's third line. That bishop also retards Red's threatened advance of the pawn up the seventh line.

Black has moved up his seventh line pawn to free the knight. Remember that the knight is not allowed to jump. For this reason, the other knight on Black's third line cannot presently move anywhere except backwards. Also note that Black has moved up both the guard and the bishop from the same side. This will enable Black to bring his rook into play efficiently. One of Black's next few moves will probably be R1=4, bringing the rook next to the king. This prepares the rook for actual penetration into Red's position.

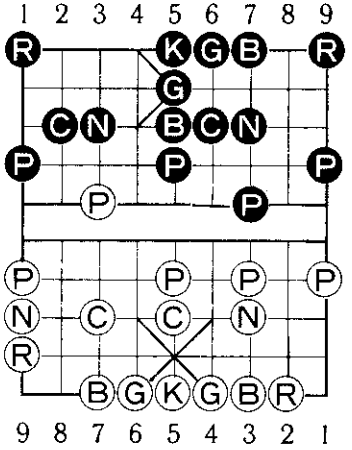
Black's formation is so strong, so advisable and so easy to remember and set up, that it is recommended that every beginning player adopt it whenever possible. However, this is not a beginner's opening. Hu Long Hua, the strongest player of Chinese chess in the world, regularly plays like this. In fact, he sometimes even turns the board around and plays the Fan Gong Ma from the red side. In short, you can play the Fan Gong Ma in every game for the rest of your life and not suffer any disadvantage, except for the fact that your opponent will be able to predict in advance what you are going to play.

The position in Dia. 54 is important from both sides of the board, so we will continue to look at it. Notice the placement of Red's rooks. Red has diversified his rooks, a common practice in Chinese chess. One rook points up the second line. The other will probably come over to either the sixth or the fourth line, from which it will try to penetrate to the ninth rank and sit on a point directly diagonal to the enemy king.

Remember that for the moment, we are just looking at the features of Red's formation, irrespective of the placement of Black's pieces. In the actual position in Dia. 54, Red's rook cannot penetrate all the way up the fourth line because it is blocked by the cannon. It will also probably never make it up the sixth line either, because as soon as the Red rook comes to the sixth line, the Black rook will oppose it on Black's fourth line and offer a trade of rooks. (Remember that Red's sixth line is one and the same as Black's fourth line, in case this causes any confusion.) The point is that Red has adopted his current attacking formation with certain objectives in mind, one of which is to try to penetrate with his left hand rook up the fourth or sixth line, if Black ever gives him a chance to do so.

One move which Red might consider right now is to advance his seventh line pawn. This does several things. First and foremost, it prevents Black from immediately

advancing his third line pawn, which is what Black might otherwise probably do on the next move. Black wants to advance his third line pawn in order to free the knight. Let us suppose that Red now advances this pawn but Black is a weak player and thinks that his knight can come out anyway. The game continues, 7. P7+1, P3+1?; 8. P7+1, reaching the position in Dia. 55.



Dia. 55

Now, Black realizes that he has just made a terrible beginner's blunder. He was thinking that he could now safely recapture the pawn by B5+3, because the knight is defended by Black's sixth line cannon. However, he forgot that, while the knight is now defended by the cannon in the position in Dia. 55, this is only because the bishop in between the knight and the cannon acts as a gun mount.

If the bishop moves away to capture the pawn, then the knight will be left undefended.

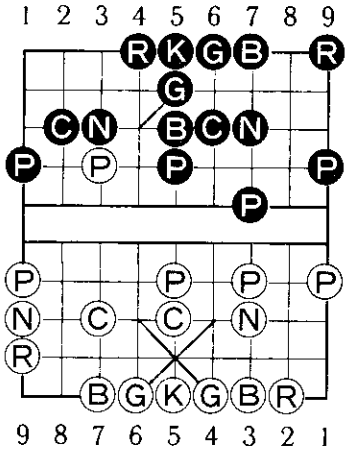
Now, Black is really worried, as well he should be because his position is already nearly lost. He considers bringing up his knight with either N3+4 or N3+2. Just in time, he remembers that the opposing pawn has now crossed the river and therefore can move sideways and capture the knight with either P7=6 or P7=8, depending on where the knight moves.

Finally, Black has a wonderful idea. He will move the rook over to defend the knight with R1=3. However, there is one little thing wrong with this. He has placed his rook into a self pin, which is an especially dangerous thing to do when there is an enemy cannon involved. He will not have to worry about this problem for very long, however. Red will put him out of his misery right away with P7+1. Now, the knight is lost. Black cannot move the knight anywhere, because then Red will capture the rook with C7+7. Therefore, Red has no choice but to move something else, following which Red will simply capture the knight with P7+1.

Still, we cannot say that the position in Dia. 55 is really lost. Black can more or less survive, although his position is bad. His best chance is to make any random developing move and thereafter retreat the knight when it is attacked by the pawn. One idea would be to play R1=4, activating the rook. Now, Red advances with 9. P7+1, both attack-

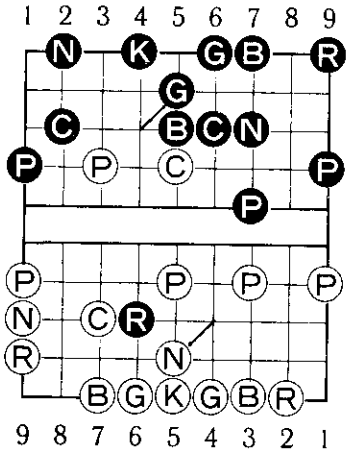
ing and blocking the knight.

Again, it must be remembered that the knight cannot jump. In this position, which is now Dia. 56, the knight on Black's third line has actually only one legal move. Black must play N3-2. If you do not understand why this is the only legal move in this position with this particular knight, go back to the section on how the pieces move.



Dia. 56

The game goes on. Black has lost a pawn and an enemy pawn has crossed the river. However, Black has some compensation. Red used a lot of moves to bring up this pawn while Black continued his development. By the way, Red can now win a second pawn with 10. C5+4.



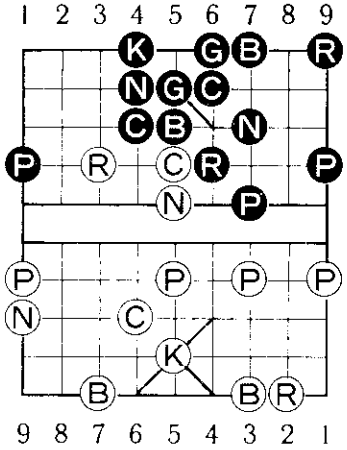
Dia. 57

Note that the knight on Black's seventh line cannot then capture the cannon because it is blocked by its own cannon on the sixth line. However, pawn captures like this are usually risky. Here, Black can immediately play R4+7, forking the cannon and knight. Red has a defense. He brings the knight back with 11. N3-5, defending the cannon. However, this type of defense is generally bad. Here, it leaves Red's king with no point of escape. Black can now play K5=4, reaching Dia. 57. This sneaky king move threatens checkmate with R4+2. Red, who had almost a winning position until just two moves ago, is now lost. He avoids immediate checkmate by interposing a pawn with 12. P7=6, breaking the connection between Black's king and rook. (It would have been much better,

instead, to interpose a cannon with 12. C5=6). Black now captures the pawn with R4-4.

Since we have gone this far, we will show how this game might continue. Red, realizing that he is lost, tries to mix it up with 13. N5+4. Black could now just win a cannon with R4=5, but he is greedy and wants more. Therefore, he plays R4+6 check. Red cannot take the rook, because two kings cannot face each other, so he is forced to play 14. K5+1. After R4=6, the game might continue 15. N4+5, R6-6 (trapping the cannon); 16. R9=6, C2=4; 17. R6+5, C6-1 (attacking the cannon with the knight); 18. C7=6 (so that if Black tries to win the cannon with N7+5, Red instead wins the rook with R6=5, discovering check with the cannon, followed by R5=4) N2+4 (if Black plays K4=5, Red can snap off the cannon with R6+1); 19. R6=7 reaching Dia. 58. Black now resigns because he has no answer to the threat of R6+3 mate since both his cannon and his knight on the fourth line are pinned by the red cannon to the king.

This has been a poorly played game. First, Black blundered a pawn, then Red nearly got himself checkmated, and then Black misplayed an easily winning position, got his pieces completely tangled up and lost. Here is the complete score of this game for posterity: **1. C2=5, N2+3; 2. N2+3, C8=6; 3. R1=2, N8+7; 4. N8+9, B3+5; 5. R9+1, P7+1; 6. C8=7, G4+5; 7. P7+1, P3+1; 8. P7+1, R1=4; 9. P7+1, N3-2; 10. C5+4 R4+7; 11. N3-5, K5=4; 12. P7=6; R4-4; 13. N5+4, R4+6; 14. K5+1, R4=6; 15. N4+5, R6-6; 16. R9=6, C2=4; 17. R6+5, C6-1; 18. C7=6, N2+4; 19. R6=7 Black resigns.**



Dia. 58

Why has all this attention plus four diagrams been devoted to such a bad game starting with essentially a beginner's blunder on the seventh move? Because games like this happen all the time, that's why. The type of blunders made in this game are rather typical of those made by new players of Chinese chess. Actually, this was an invented game. No two humans really played like this.

We will return again to a discussion of Dia. 54, because the formations of both Red and Black are to be recommended. As noted previously, Red's next move will probably be to advance the seventh line pawn with P7+1.

This is a good move because it freezes Black's third line knight. It also gives the Red knight on the ninth line a chance to get into the game with a future N9+7. Also, at some future point in the game, Red might advance his seventh line pawn again with the idea that if the pawn captures the pawn, then the cannon captures the knight. Again, this does not work right now because of Black's central placement of the bishop, as a result of which the cannon defends the knight. However, later in the game, an advance of the seventh line pawn is likely to be a strong attacking idea. Indeed, that is exactly why Red has placed his cannon where it now is.

There is still more to be said about Dia. 54. Notice the placement of the red knights. One is near the center, but the other is on the edge. This will shock and horrify most players of international chess. There is a saying in international chess that "a knight on the rim is grim". Every beginner is told not to develop his knights in this way.

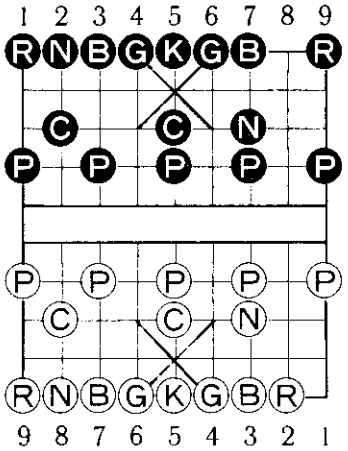
However, in Chinese chess it is not so bad to put a knight on the rim. Grandmasters do it all the time. There are several reasons for this. A knight on the third or seventh line is likely to be both undefended and unable to move. On the other hand, a knight on the rim is automatically subject to protection by the bishop. For example, the third line knight in Dia. 54 might be stuck in its present position for a long time. It will probably not be able to get into the game until the pawn in front of it moves. That

pawn cannot be moved now, however, because it will be captured by the enemy pawn. After that, the black pawn would advance and push back the red knight, just as the black knight was pushed back in Dias. 55, 56 and 57.

One way in which Red might try to get his knight out some day will be to bring his second line rook up four and then advance the third line pawn up one to force a trade of pawns. However, this will not work at present. If Red, in Dia. 54, plays 7. R2+4, Black will counter with R9=8, offering a trade of rooks. If Red accepts this offer with 8. R2+5, Black recaptures with N7-8 and Black has gained from this exchange. In Dia. 54, Red had an active rook which controlled the second file, whereas Black had a passive rook stuck in the corner. Now, Black has exchanged his bad rook for Red's good rook.

On the other hand, if it was now Black's move in Dia. 54, he would not bring the rook directly over to oppose the red rook. The reason for this is that it would involve a loss of time. If Black to move now plays R9=8, then Red immediately will exchange rooks. Red is quite happy with this exchange because he has gained two moves. This is the concept known in international chess as the "tempo".

This concept is quite important because it comes up all the time. We will illustrate it more clearly with a position from an actual popular opening variation shown in Dia. 59. This position arises from the moves **1. C2=5, C8=5; 2. N2+3, N8+7; 3. R1=2.**



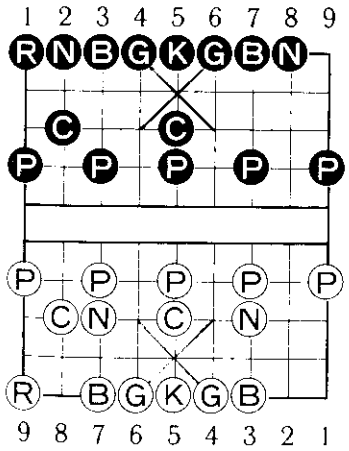
Dia. 59

In this position, Black cannot continue with 3 . . . R8=9 because then Red exchanges rooks with 4. R2+9, N7-8; 5. N8+7, reaching Dia. 60. Now, count the number of pieces which have been developed. Red has moved out three pieces: one cannon and two knights. Black, on the other hand, has only one piece out: the cannon. He lost two moves because the knight moved out and then back. It is now Black's move. He may decide to bring the same knight out again. That will still leave him a move behind where he would have been had he not exchanged rooks.

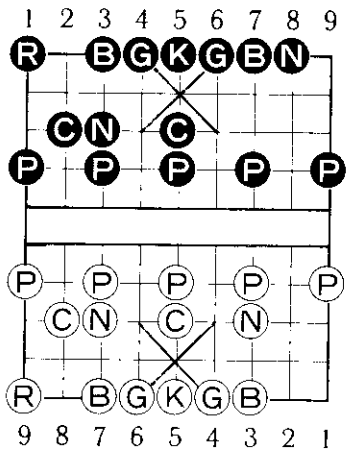
Let us say instead then that in Dia. 59, Black continues with 3 .... N2+3. Now, if the red rook moves up the line with R2+4, Black seizes the opportunity with R9=8. Then, if Red exchanges rooks with 5. R5+5, N7-8; 6. N8+7, we reach Dia. 61.

Compare Dia. 61 to Dia. 60. In both cases it is Black to move. Perhaps you can see the difference. Black has one extra knight out. This makes all the difference in the world. In Dia. 60, Red has a far superior position. In Dia. 61, the position is almost dead even and Red has nearly given away his advantage of the first opening move.

Going back just one more time to Dia. 54, we have now explained various reasons why the formations adopted by both sides are considered favorable. However, there is no such thing as a really solid position in Chinese chess. Every position contains weaknesses. You just have to try to do your best to stop your opponent from coming in to exploit your weaknesses, while thinking of ways to exploit your opponent's weaknesses.



Dia. 60



Dia. 61

Let us consider first the weaknesses in Red's position in Dia. 54. His cannon occupies the center, which is considered useful in attacking the enemy king. However, as long as the cannon stays where it is, the bishops can never get connected the way that Black's bishops are now.

Another problem is with the knights. As already explained, the knight on the third line might wind up stuck there for a long time. The other knight is also not doing so well. The best way for it to get out will be through the moves P9+1, N9+8, and N8+6, attacking the enemy knight. Remember that in this resulting position, the red knight is threatening to capture the black knight but the black knight is blocked by the pawn and therefore cannot capture the red knight. However, this maneuver takes time. It also conflicts with Red's more urgent plan to advance his seventh line pawn, because that pawn will block the knight from going from the eighth to the sixth line.

Finally, Red is faced with the burden of being red. Having the first move is a big advantage, much bigger than in international chess, but this compels Red to attack strongly and try to crush his opponent. However, if the attack fails, Red could be in trouble.

Black also has problems to worry about. Having a bishop and a guard in front of the king is good for defense, but prevents Black from shifting his rooks quickly from one side of the board to the other as Red can do. He also has problems with the cannon on the second line

and the knight next to it. The cannon right now is completely undefended and the red rook might attack it with R9=8. The knight on the third line is defended but will not be able to get out easily. It is also to some extent tied to the defense of the center pawn.

One final point should be mentioned. Black in Dia. 54 has a pawn en prise. However, nothing would please Black more than for Red to capture this pawn with C7+4. This would be truly a beginner's move. The reason this move is so weak is that then the cannon will have nothing to do after it arrives on this point. Moreover, Black can attack the cannon by playing N7+6 followed by N6+4. If the cannon moves away, Black's other knight will then be free. All of Black's current problems will be solved. The rook now on Black's first line will come in quickly, the two knights will swarm all over and Red will be lucky to survive for twenty moves.

Chapter Six

Relative Value of the Pieces

In international chess there is a sort of mathematical formula which says that a pawn is worth one, a knight or bishop three, a rook five and a queen nine. Thus, a queen and a rook are worth two bishops, two knights and two pawns. This formula has proven over time to be surprisingly accurate.

In Chinese chess there is no such formula. In order to appease the craving by some players of international chess for a formula which applies to Chinese chess, one occasionally sees such a formula, but this concept is really invalid. However, certain observations can be made.

First, the rook is by far the strongest piece. In fact, it is even stronger than a knight plus a cannon combined. Two cannons plus a knight or two knights plus a cannon are stronger than a rook, however.

Second, the knight and the cannon are about equal. It all depends on the position. In the early part of the game, when the board is cluttered with pieces, the cannon is stronger. Later on, as the pieces are cleared from the board, the knight gets stronger and the cannon weaker. The reason for this is that the cannon cannot capture without jumping. If there were no pieces to jump over,

then the cannon would be worthless.

On the other hand, the knight has problems in the early part of the game because it is not able to jump. As the pieces are cleared from the board, the knight becomes stronger and stronger.

Then there is the pawn. The pawn becomes tremendously strong and valuable in the endgame. Without a pawn it is often impossible to win, even with force which would seem to be overwhelming. For example, it is possible to be a full rook ahead and not have sufficient mating material because of not having any pawns. However, just one pawn ahead can be enough to win the game.

On the other hand, in the opening, a pawn can be actually worth less than nothing. Pawns get in the way of the rooks and especially of the knights. If the pawns were not always getting in the way, the knights could quickly come out with devastating force.

The bishops and guards are purely defensive in nature. Therefore, they have zero value in some cases to a player who is attacking. A player who is in no danger of losing will find the guards and bishops to be valueless, except in some cases when he is attacking with the cannon and wants to bring it around behind a guard in order to check the king. The guard is a strong piece when defending against the knight but often worse than worthless when defending against the cannon. See, for example, Dia. 15

where Black is in checkmate only because of his own stupid guards. It often happens that a defender in the endgame will try to throw away his guards and bishops, especially if being attacked by a cannon.

If a player has one pawn in the endgame, but that pawn has crossed the river and is slowly approaching the enemy king, exactly how valuable is it? It may be worth a thousand points if it is threatening to give checkmate. Otherwise, it might not be worth anything. A defender is often willing to trade both of his bishops for just one slowly approaching pawn. Otherwise, the pawn may just slip past the bishops and render them useless.

In short, there is no valid way to assign any fixed numerical value to any of the pieces. It all just depends on the position.

Chapter Seven

General Strategic Considerations

One thing which a player of international chess will have to do if he wants to take up Chinese chess is to learn how to think differently. In other words, he should try to reshape the structure of his brain.

In spite of the similarity between the two games, the basic strategic ideas are fundamentally different between them. For example, in international chess there is the concept of the center squares. Ideally, you try in the opening to occupy the center squares with pawns and to control them with pieces.

No such concept exists in Chinese chess. The actual physical location of the center of the board has no strategic significance in Chinese chess. However, there is a different idea. Red usually tries to attack up the center line by putting a cannon on that line because the enemy king happens to be on that line. If that line is blocked, he instead tries to attack up the fourth or sixth line. Another idea is to try to put a rook or a cannon or both on the enemy's back rank in order to attack the king from the side.

A different consideration is that there are no long diagonal pieces in Chinese chess. There is no queen or

long range bishop. In international chess, one tries to keep the major pieces defended because of the danger of queen forks. One does not have to worry about this in Chinese chess. Even knight forks occur less often, simply because the board is bigger.

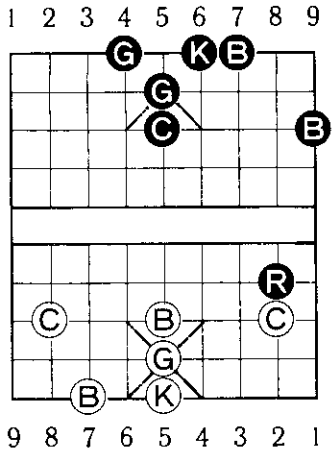
In Chinese chess, as there are no big diagonal pieces, everything moves horizontally or vertically, unless you consider the knight move to be a partially diagonal move. Therefore, attacking and defensive pieces take longer to maneuver around the board into the right position. You will need to be able to see attacks coming from a longer range in order to be able to bring your defensive pieces around in time. You will also need to keep remembering that the best way to stop your opponent's pieces is usually by blocking them. You will not have been used to doing this in international chess, and therefore will keep forgetting about it in Chinese chess.

Often, an enemy rook, cannon or knight will be slowly maneuvering through a clutter of other pieces. You will have to be able to realize that it is getting ready to checkmate you four or five moves in advance. Otherwise, when the position is only two or three moves away from checkmate, it will often be too late to stop it.

In Chinese chess, a player often wants to "guard the river". He might move the cannon, for example, up to the edge of the river, just to block an opposing piece from crossing it. This concept, of course, does not exist in international chess.

In international chess, you usually try to keep the rooks connected and preferably doubled. Among other things, this protects them from queen forks. In Chinese chess, this is generally not desirable. To the contrary, you often try to diversify the rooks. If they do not share any common line or rank, they will cover more territory. Moreover, it can be dangerous to have two rooks on the same line. If an enemy cannon manages to get on that line, one of the rooks might be lost.

Blocking is important in Chinese chess. In international chess, one rarely tries to block the enemy pieces. The queen cannot be blocked because it is too strong, the bishop cannot be blocked because it is too weak and the knight cannot be blocked because it can jump. The bishop, because it moves diagonally, cannot block the rook and the rook cannot block the bishop. In Chinese chess, the pieces are much easier to block. Just place any piece in front of a knight and it cannot go forward. The cannon can also be blocked in a similar way, as long as there is no piece behind which it can jump over and capture. The rook can be perpetually blocked by the cannon. For example, in Dia. 62, if Black's rook ever reaches Red's back rank, it will be checkmate. However, the rook will never be able to get past Red's cannons, because, wherever the rook moves, one or the other of the two cannons will be able to block it.



Dia. 62

Notice the way that the cannons in Dia. 62 seem to behave like a scale of weights, with each side balancing the other.

In short, **in Chinese chess it is necessary always to be thinking about ways to block your opponent and to stop him from blocking you.**

Having said that, let us look at the individual pieces and see how they can best be used.

Chapter Eight

Management of the Pieces

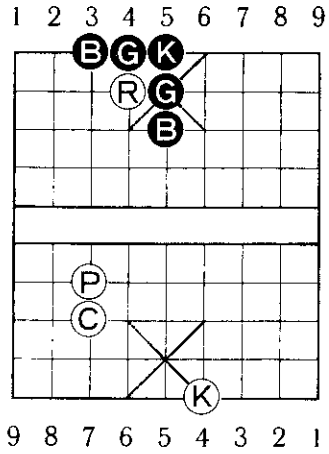
The Rook

The rook is by far the strongest piece. As a result, it is important to bring the rooks quickly into the game and not to leave them stuck in the corners. This is often easier said than done. It is usually possible to get at least one of the rooks out quickly. However, the other rook often gets left behind and is just forgotten about. We have already seen several examples of this. In the game in Chapter Four, Red lost in just 12 moves. The reason is obvious. Black was able to activate his rooks quickly. On the other hand, Red's rooks never really got into the game.

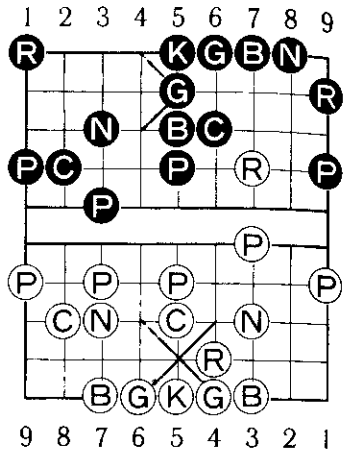
Don't feel so smug about this. You are going to lose a lot of games just like Red did. Everybody loses games like this. The best chance is that if your opponent has an active rook and you have a passive rook, try to exchange your rook for his. A discussion of how to do this has already been presented in connection with Dias. 59 to 61.

If you do manage to get a rook out, what do you do with it? Naturally, you try to get it behind enemy lines. One of the best places for the rook is inside the imperial palace just diagonal to the enemy king, as in Dia. 63. Not only does the rook there menace the king, but it breaks

the connection between the two bishops. For example, in Dia. 63, the red cannon is threatening to capture the black bishop with C7+7 checkmate.



Dia. 63

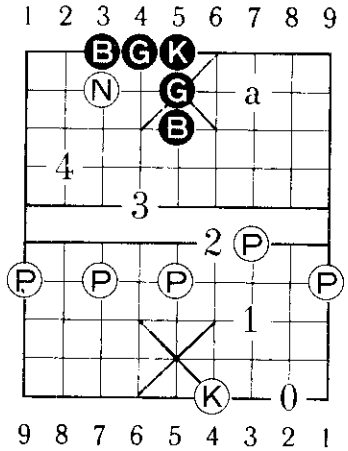


Dia. 64

One other thing to be concerned about is that if you manage to get one of your rooks behind enemy lines too quickly, it might get trapped. For example, in Dia. 64, Red seems to have done everything right. All of his major pieces are developed and his rooks are posted actively. Red has even won a pawn. On the other hand, both of Black's rooks are stuck in passive, defensive positions. The only small problem which Red has is that his rook is trapped and will be captured by the cannon on the next move. Actually, Red has a lost position already. Be careful about this; this sort of thing happens quite frequently.

The Knight

The knight is the second easiest piece for a player of international chess to master because it also exists there. In contrast, Chinese have a lot of trouble with the knight and consider it to be more difficult than the cannon.

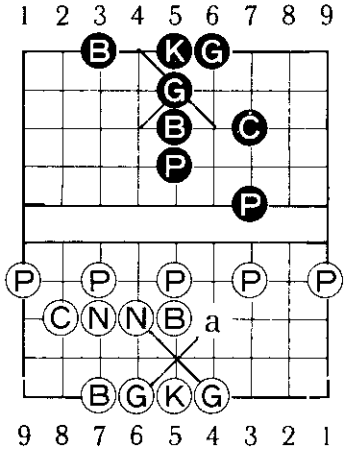


Dia. 65

One of the best places for the knight to be is shown in Dia. 65, which is checkmate. How many moves did it take for the knight to get there? The answer is five. Starting on point zero, the knight arrived on points 1, 2, 3 and 4 as shown on the diagram. In practice, it is much easier for the knight to cross to the opposite side of the board than it is to arrive at point 'a' on the same side of the board.

When the knight arrives at one of these vital points in the enemy camp, there is a Chinese expression that "the

horse is in the stable". Usually, when the horse is in the stable, checkmate is not far away.



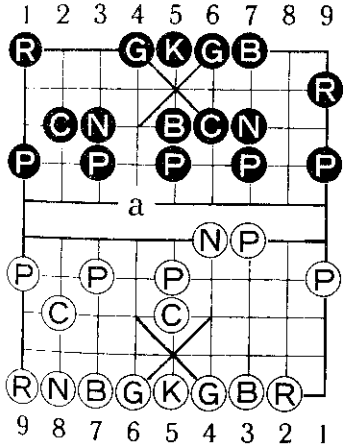
Dia. 66

In the initial position, a knight has only two legal moves. Remember, it can't move immediately in front of the guard because it is blocked by the bishop. However, you might want to move the bishop at an early stage and shift the knight quickly to the opposite side of the board as in Dia. 66. This maneuver is especially suitable when the enemy has hindered the knight from coming directly out by advancing the seventh line pawn, preventing the third line pawn from advancing, as in the diagram.

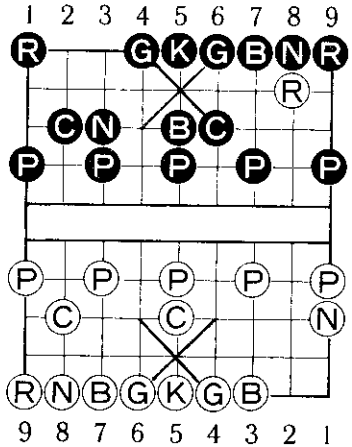
In the early part of the game, the knights are difficult to manage because they are always getting blocked by their own pawns. However, you must get your knights out

quickly because otherwise you cannot activate your rooks. For this reason, there was once a tendency to bring the knights immediately to the edge of the board with moves like N2+1 and N8+9. There, they were out of the way and at the same time were protected by the bishops. However, modern players realize that at least one of the knights must be developed towards the center or else they are likely to be left permanently out of the game.

While the knights must be developed at an early stage, you should be careful about moving them out into the open board too quickly. Dia. 67 illustrates a type of position which might arise. This position could be reached after the moves: **1. C2=5, N2+3; 2. N2+3, C8=6; 3. R1=2, N8+7; 4. P3+1, B3+5; 5. N3+4, R9+1.**



Dia. 67



Dia. 68

Here Red has a choice of two succulent pawns. Which one should he take? He can capture the pawn on his third line directly with 6. N4+3 or he can win the center pawn with 6. N4+5, N3+5; 7. C5+4, G4+5. (Remember again that the black knight cannot now take the cannon because it is blocked by its own cannon).

The answer is, of course, neither. Taking the pawn on the third file is especially bad because the knight has no future there. If it wants to get back in the game, it will have to go back to where it came from. Note that the knight will not be able to hope for N3+1 followed by N1+3 check, because the edge point it needs to cross is guarded by the bishop.

Taking the center pawn is also bad. In general, it is not a good idea to waste time trying to win pawns in the opening. In this case, Black will eventually move the cannon on his sixth line, unblocking the knight and attacking Red's cannon that will then have to retreat.

In the type of position in Dia. 67, the correct plan is to bring the knight to point 'a', attacking the black knight. Later in the game, Red's knight might even reach the objective shown in Dia. 65. However, at present, it is too early in the game to bring the knight to point 'a'. If Red plays 6. N4+6, Black plays P3+1, unblocking his knight, thereby counter-attacking Red's knight. Then there will likely be an exchange of knights with 7. N6+7, C6=3. Now, Red has spent four moves on a knight, only to exchange it for a knight which has only made one move. In the resulting position, Black has a clear advantage.

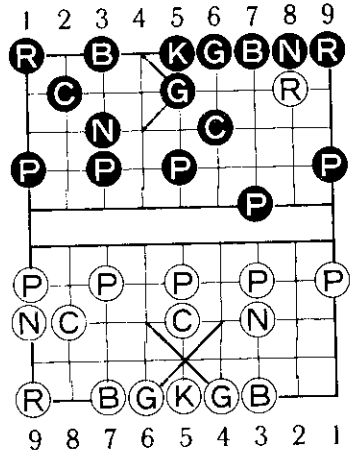
Diagram 68 (preceding page) shows a common type of trap which almost every beginner has fallen into at least once. This particular position could arise after the following moves: **1. C2=5, N2+3; 2. N2+1, B3+5; 3. R1=2, C8=6; 4. R2+8 Black Resigns.**

The reason Black resigns is that his knight is trapped. Remember again that the knight cannot jump. Regardless of what Black now does, on the next move Red will play C5=2 followed by C2+7, capturing the knight.

However, if Black had played G4+5 instead of B3+5 on the second move, he would have a way out. He could play 4. . . . , C2-1 attacking the rook. Regardless of where the rook moves, the knight will be able to come out and Black will be ahead in development. (Actually, Black has a way to save himself in Dia. 68. Can you find it?)

This actually happened in the great game Larry Kaufman played against Grandmaster Lu Chin in a gymnasium in New York City's Chinatown on June 17, 1986 before a crowd of several thousand spectators. It was an exhibition game which was supposed to prove that a person who is not Chinese can nevertheless play Chinese chess.

The game started as follows: **1. C2=5, N2+3; 2. N2+3, P7+1; 3. R1=2, C8=6; 4. R2+8, G4+5; 5. N8+7, C2-1** reaching Dia. 69.



Dia. 69 : Kaufman v. Lu Chin

It is not clear why Kaufman thought that his opponent, the current champion of all of China, was going to allow his knight to be trapped on just the fourth move. Anyway, in Dia. 69 Kaufman's rook was forced to retreat and the game continued: **6. R2-4, N8+7; 7. P3+1, P7+1; 8. R2=3, N7+6; 9. C8=7, B3+5.** Black had now equalized, in spite of having the second move, due to the time Red had wasted moving his rook back and forth.

Actually, after this opening, Kaufman played quite reasonably and his opponent allowed the game to go on for 27 moves before sacrificing for checkmate.

The Cannon

If you want to know how to use the cannon, don't ask me. I still haven't got it figured out. Seriously, the cannon

is the most difficult and frustrating piece for a player of international chess to deal with. Perhaps the real problem is that everything else is so easy that you don't expect to experience so much difficulty with the cannon.

The Chinese, on the other hand, consider the cannon an easy piece to deal with. Their problem is that they can't figure out the knight, which is a really simple piece.

Intellectually, of course, the cannon is an easy piece to understand. It moves like a rook but captures by jumping. What is so difficult about that? The problem is that in the heat of battle, with the clock ticking and moments left to make the final moves, you tend to forget all about the fact that the cannon can jump. Horrible blunders result. Here is how to stop a few of the most common blunders:

1. When you have both a rook and a cannon lined up to capture a target piece, you have to remember that the cannon must capture first. If the rook captures first, the cannon will no longer be attacking that point. For example, going back to Dia. 68, after the red cannon comes over to the second line, the knight must be captured by the cannon, not by the rook. After that, the rook must withdraw and only then the cannon can withdraw. Because of the time this takes and the resulting danger of a counter-attack, there is the temptation to want to take the knight with the rook. This is a good way to lose a rook.

2. Never put three pieces on the same line without checking to make sure that there is no cannon lurking

about which might be able to attack all of them on that line. For example, in Dia. 66, if Black had a cannon which he could place on point 'a', he would automatically attack either a cannon or a knight. Regardless of which piece moves away, he will be able to capture one of the remaining pieces on that line. (Actually, in this particular example, Red would be able to recover the piece. Can you see why? This sort of situation occurs frequently.)

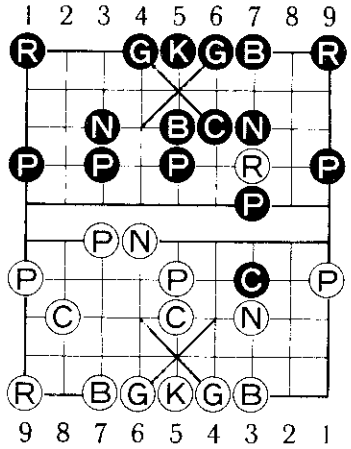
3. Remember that when you capture something with a cannon, it will not normally be able to go back to where it came from right away and might even get trapped.

4. When attacking the enemy king with your cannon, remember that the enemy guards are your friends. If they are in such a position that you can capture them easily, they are probably getting in the way of their own king.

5. Do not go around capturing random pawns in the opening with your cannon. Once the cannon has captured an early pawn, it is likely to be out of the game for a long time. If you really want to capture a lot of pawns, your opponent will be happy to oblige you. You can start the game with C8=7. Then, you can capture two pawns with C7+4 and C7=3. By now, your opponent will have activated his rooks, so you will be able safely to capture two more pawns with C3=9 and C9=1. Now, there is only one pawn left, and you can get that one as well with C2=5 and C5+4. You have now got all of the pawns and the position is nearly checkmate. The only problem is that

you are the one who is going to get checkmated, not your opponent. While you have been taking off all of these pawns, your opponent was developing his pieces and by now he should be just about ready for mate.

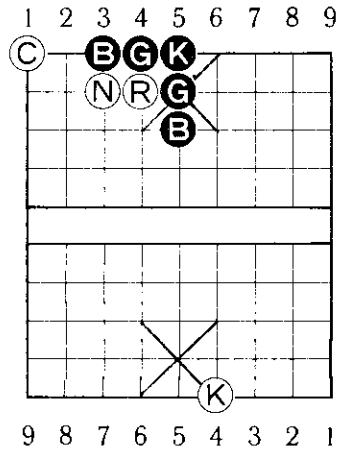
6. Cannon forks are dangerous, especially in the early part of the game. The more pieces that are on the board, the better it is for the cannon. Here is a typical example of a cannon fork. **1. C2=5, N2+3; 2. N2+3, C8=6; 3. R1=2, N8+7; 4. R2+6, P7+1; 5. P7+1, B3+5; 6. N8+7, C2+4; 7. N7+6, R9=8.** Now, Red decides not to exchange rooks because he does not want to give up his active rook for his opponent's relatively undeveloped rook. Therefore, he decides to attack the knight. **8. R2=3?, C2=7** reaching Dia. 70.



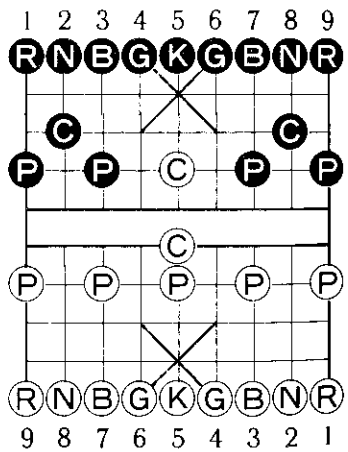
Dia. 70

Black has just forked Red's rook and bishop with his cannon. Red's only chance is to attack the other cannon with **9. R3=4**, but Red first captures the bishop with **C7+3** check and then defends the other cannon with **10. G4+5, G4+5**. Black now has nearly won the game. The important thing is not that he has won Red's bishop (in itself a minor matter) but that he is able to get into the enemy corner with Red's king exposed. This brings us to the next point, which is:

7. The most effective position for the cannon is in the opponent's corner. When the cannon is there, it is almost impossible to dislodge, especially if there is nothing between it and the enemy king. The rook cannot interpose to drive it away because the king would then be in check.



Dia. 71



Dia. 72

The ideal placement of the three major pieces, knight, rook and cannon, is illustrated in Dia. 71. The cannon is in the corner, the knight is in the stable and the rook is inside the palace. It is not surprising that Red has checkmate on the move with R6+1.

Another point is that if Black does not defend himself, the red cannons can checkmate without any outside help in just four moves. From the starting position, Red can play the moves C2=5, C5+4, C8+2 and C8=5 checkmate. The position is shown in Dia. 72. If you cannot see why this is checkmate, please review the section on the movement of the pieces.

The Bishop

Ideally, the bishops should be connected together, so as to protect the king. Remember, of course, that the bishops are purely defensive pieces; they cannot cross the river and they cannot jump. When two bishops are connected together, the opponent will often try to put a piece in between them so as to break the connection. Once one of the bishops is captured, the other one is almost dead. You really need to have both bishops together for them to be of much use.

Actually, this is not completely true. Although the bishop is a weak piece, it protects vital and important points. When there is only one bishop left, it might run to the edge of the board, figuring that the opponent will not

take the time and trouble to try to pick it off. From the edge, the bishop only protects two points. However, these two points might turn out to be vital. The presence of the bishop on the edge of the board might slow down the enemy attack just long enough to save the game.

Consider how much stronger two bishops are when they are connected together. When the two bishops are connected and one is in the middle, they defend a total of six points. However, when they are not connected or when neither of the bishops is in the middle, the two of them together defend exactly four points, not more and not less. Try moving the bishops around the board to verify that this is true. The reason for this is that when the bishops are not connected, they do not defend each other. For that reason alone, they defend four points and not six. For example, in Dia. 71, the two bishops only defend four points between them because there is a rook in between and therefore the points upon which the bishops themselves are sitting are not defended. However, remove the rook and now the bishops defend a total of six points.

Naturally, you will want to try to win one of your opponent's bishops. However, remember that the bishop is basically a weak piece. If you waste too much time trying to maneuver around just to capture a bishop, you might fall behind in development and your opponent might be able to counter-attack. It is best to go after a bishop only in connection with a direct threat of mate.

The Guard

The guard is an important piece in protecting against the rook or the knight, but is useless against the cannon. When faced with an attack, one of the guards should be placed in the middle of the imperial palace to protect the other guard and also the king.

However, the guards often do not guard at all. Sometimes they help strangle their own king. For example, in Dias. 72 and 15, Black is in checkmate because the guards prevent their own king from escaping. Remove the guards and these positions are no longer checkmate. There are more and better examples of this.

Frequently, in the endgame, a player will just push his guards aside and march his king to the front. This is not only to attack the enemy king but also to keep the guards from interfering with their own king.

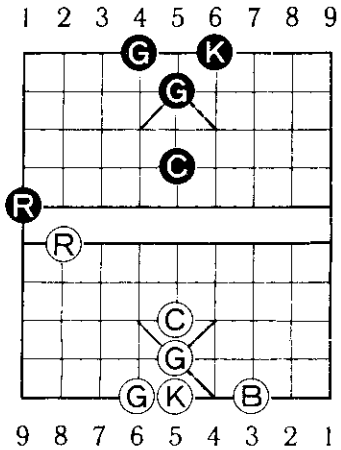
If your opponent gives you the chance to capture one of his guards, think twice. A loose guard often causes more problems for the defender than for the attacker. Perhaps it will be better to let him keep his guard and concentrate on checkmating his king.

The King

Although the king's safety is important, you must also remember that the king can be an aggressive attacking piece. Although the king can never leave the imperial palace, it acts like a rook with respect to the enemy king.

The way to attack the enemy king is usually up the three center lines. Dia. 73 illustrates a common situation. Whoever moves first wins.

Both sides want to seize Red's fourth line. If Red is to move, he will play 1. R8=4 check. Black must move his king with K6=5 and then Red will play K5=4. Now, mate is unstoppable. No matter what Black does, unless he just gives away his rook, Red has checkmate on the next move with R4+5.



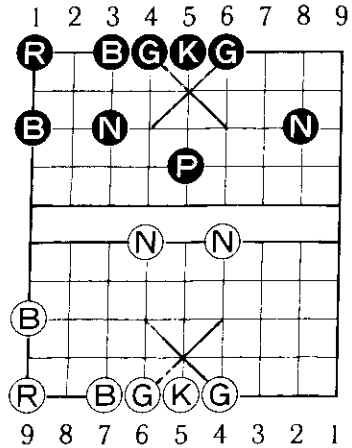
Dia. 73

If, on the other hand, it is Black's turn to move, he seizes the same line with R1=6. On the next move he will play R6+5. Remember in these examples that the king cannot take the rook because the kings cannot face each other. At the same time, the guard cannot take the

rook because the cannon would then check the king. (However, once again, Red does have an ingenious move to save himself. Try and find it.)

Always be on the lookout for the type of situation shown in Dia. 73. This is one of the most common kind of checkmates in all of Chinese chess. Please try to be sure that you are the one who is checkmating your opponent, not he the one who is checkmating you.

A kind of tactical motif which often arises is shown in Dia. 74. As usual, this is supposed to be just an example, not an actual playing position.



Dia. 74

Red is a pawn down and wants a draw, so he decides to capture the last pawn. However, there is a surprise in store for him. He captures the pawn with 1. N4+5,

N3+5; 2. N6+5. His knight is now pinned. It cannot move away because the two kings cannot face each other. Therefore, the black knight simply attacks the red knight with either N8+7 or N8-6. The red knight cannot move and therefore is lost.

However, Red notices that after the black knight captures the red knight, then the black knight will also be pinned. Therefore, he plays 3. R9=8, so that after N7-5 he has 4. R8+6 winning back the knight. However, instead Black can play 3. . . ., R1+1, so that after 4. R8+6 he has R1=5 pinning the knight and at the same time breaking the connection between the two kings so that the red knight can be safely captured on the next move.

In the middle and endgame, watch your opponent's king carefully. Beware if he ever moves his king one point to the left or right without being forced to do so. This sneaky king move is almost certainly part of a plan to checkmate your king. When your opponent moves his king, all sorts of bells should be going off in your brain. You should start trying to figure out what mate he is planning and what you can do to prevent it. (Actually, by the time he moves his king, it is often too late to stop mate.)

The Pawn

A famous quotation from international chess by Philidor, the best player in the world more that two hundred years ago, is "pawns are the soul of chess."

Pawns are not quite the soul of Chinese chess. Sometimes they just seem to get in the way. However, it would often be impossible to win an endgame without pawns.

In the early part of the game, the major benefit of the pawns are that they keep the enemy pawns out. Starting from the initial position, as soon as a pawn crosses the river, it encounters an opposing pawn.

Pawns are easy to capture in the opening. Your opponent will generally be happy to let you capture one or more of his pawns with your cannon or your knight. You had better avoid this. For example, let's say that at some early stage you play C8=7 followed by C7+4. Now, you have won a pawn. The next thing you will need to do is get your equivalent pawn across the river. Therefore, you push with P7+1 and P7+1 again. Now, you notice that your pawn has just blocked the only retreat points available for your cannon. You want to bring your cannon back so it can shift over and attack something else. At present, it is more or less out of the game. Therefore, you get your pawn out of the way with P7=6 and retreat your cannon with C7-4.

You have now captured a pawn, but you have expended six moves to get your pawn across the river and bring your cannon back to safety. Your opponent decides that this nonsense has gone on for long enough. He brings his rook over, recaptures your pawn, and material is equal again, except that you are far behind in development.

Chapter Nine

The Endgame

The endgame is a vast subject in Chinese chess. Most games between fairly equal opponents reach the endgame. The endgame itself often goes on for more than a hundred moves and two-hundred-move endgames are not that uncommon. There are lots of books on endgame studies, just crammed with all kinds of fantastic and unbelievable solutions to difficult situations.

This presents a problem because it is obviously beyond the scope of this book to deal adequately with such a vast subject. The reader will not be prepared for this. More than that, the biggest problem which a new player of Chinese chess will have is just to get to the endgame at all. Most new players will get wiped out long before that.

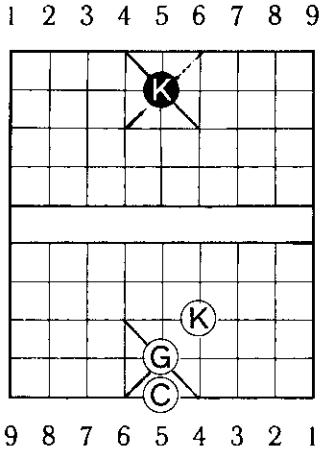
Finally, there is the problem that most examples in the endgame books do not seem to have much practical value. Perhaps it is like the bishop and knight against king endgame in international chess. Everybody studies and learns this endgame as a beginner. Then, it never comes up. I have been playing international chess since I was seven years old and I have never yet seen this endgame actually played in all the hundreds of tournaments and matches I have attended. Bobby Fischer once told me that

he did not know how to win the bishop and knight against king endgame. (He said he would figure it out over the board if the situation ever came up.)

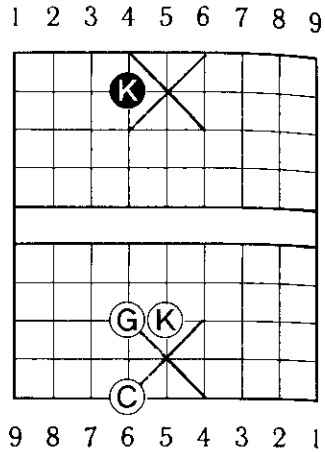
Here, we will try to solve the problem with Chinese chess by discussing just a few of the more basic endgame situations. In Chapter Three dealing with simple checkmates, we already showed two of the most basic mates. Diagram 12 shows how to mate with king and rook against king. Diagram 14 shows how to mate with a king and knight against king. The other would be king and cannon against king. However, a cannon alone is not enough to checkmate. The cannon must also be aided by a guard (a bishop will not do). The cannon comes behind the guard and checks, reaching a position like that in Dia. 75 (next page). Notice the routine procedure of putting the king in the front of the imperial palace so as to more easily threaten the enemy king.

Now, the black king is in check from the red cannon. He must move to the left with K5 = 4. The red king also moves to the left, seizing control of the center line. Next, the cannon and the guard move one line to the left, reaching the position in Dia. 76 (next page), which is checkmate. The next example is Dia. 77 (page 99). In this position, Red has an extra rook. However, the game is a draw. Please check this out. Try moving the pieces around until you are satisfied that there is no way that Red can make progress. Similarly, a single knight or a single can-

non would not be enough to win in this situation.



Dia. 75

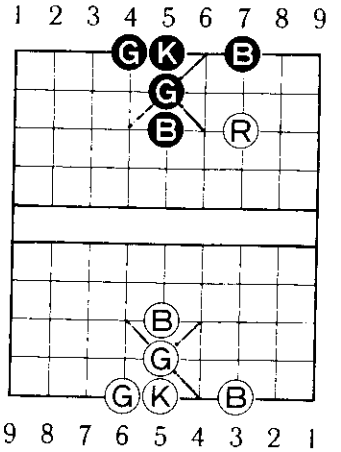


Dia. 76

This example is supposed to teach you the importance of pawns in the endgame. Without pawns, it is generally impossible to win. Only one pawn is usually more than enough, however. A single pawn can be worth more than two bishops in the endgame. If ever you are in a losing position in the endgame (as often you will be) try to run around and capture all of your opponent's pawns. If you can get all of his pawns, you have a good chance to draw. However, if just one pawn escapes from your clutches, you are probably a dead duck.

Try to catch the pawns before they cross the river. Before crossing the river, pawns have only one legal move

and so are easy to catch, especially if you still have a pawn in the way. However, once across the river, they have three directions in which they can move and it is difficult even for the mighty rook to catch them.



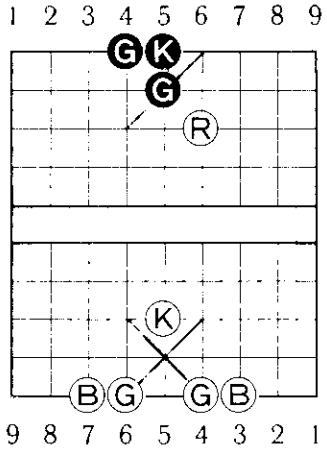
Dia. 77

Masters of Chinese chess, like masters of international chess, are especially masters of the endgame. They win consistently with even the tiniest advantage, or no advantage at all. Frequently, the player with the advantage will win even a theoretically drawn endgame. He just keeps moving his pieces back and forth, torturing his opponent to death, until finally his opponent allows a fatal weakness.

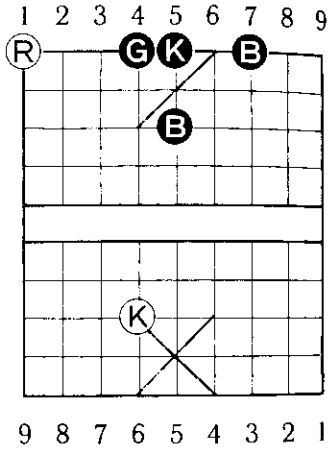
Going back to Dia. 77, remove either one of Black's

bishops or one of Black's guards. You can also remove all of Red's bishops and guards, because they are totally irrelevant to the situation.

Having done that, the position is now a win. If you removed a bishop, then it is easy to run down the remaining bishop. Finally, you might reach a position like that in Dia. 78, which is mate (by stalemate). Notice that Red has pushed away his guards and bishops so as to try to directly confront the enemy king.



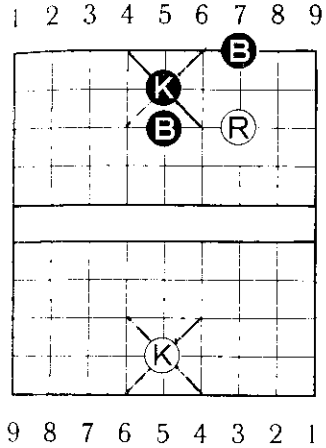
Dia. 78



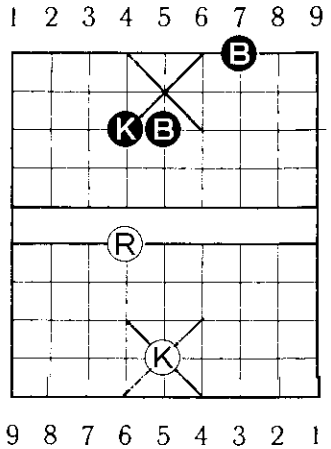
Dia. 79

If you removed a guard then you might wind up in a position like that in Dia. 79. On the next move, Red will take the guard with the rook. Later on, you might reach a position such as that in Dia. 80. The red rook threatens to

capture the back bishop with R3+2. If that bishop moves away, then he takes the front bishop. Therefore, Black has no choice but to go to the left with K5=4. Then, Red checks and puts his rook right in the center of the imperial palace.

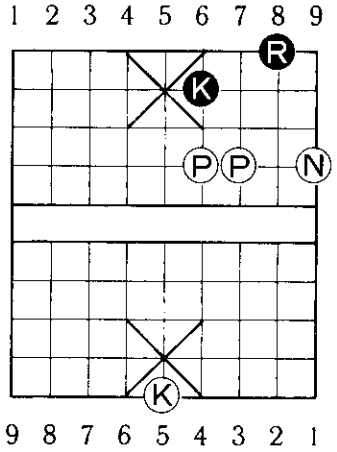


Dia. 80

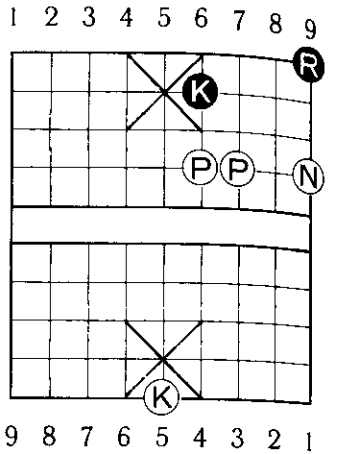


Dia. 81

Now, Black is in a situation which in international chess is known as "zugzwang". If Black was not required to make a move but could simply pass, the game would be a draw. However, the rules require Black to move something. Any move he makes will allow Red either to capture one of the bishops or, if the king is in front of the imperial palace, to bring his rook back and over, achieving the checkmate shown in Dia. 81.



Dia. 82



Dia. 83

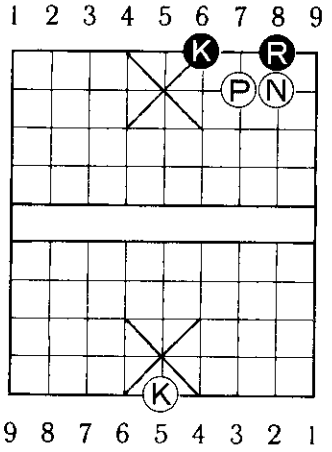
Incidentally, I had to figure this all out myself. These endgames are considered so elementary that it is difficult to find them in any book in Chinese on Chinese chess, even a beginner's book. You should play around with these endgames yourself until you are satisfied that you can win them.

Diagrams 82 and 83 are a cute duo which is in the books. The only difference between them is the position of the black rook. Both positions are a win for Red. In Dia. 82, Red starts with **1. P4+1** check. If Black retreats the king, Red has N1+3 checkmate.

Therefore, Black takes the pawn with **1. . . . . , K6+1.** Now Red plays **2. P3+1**, advancing the pawn with check,

so Black must retreat the king with **K6-1.** Again, Red advances the pawn with check with **3. P3+1.** If Black goes forward, Red checkmates with N1-3. Therefore, Black must retreat again with **K6-1.** Now, Red plays the key move of **4. N1+2**, reaching Dia. 84.

In Dia. 84, Black has only one move. He must play **R8=9.** Now, Red merely retreats with **5. N2-3.** On the next move, he has checkmate regardless of what Black plays. Presently, he threatens mate with P3=4. If Black tries to defend with R9+1, Red has mate with P3+1.



Dia. 84

In the endgame, you must remember that perpetual check is prohibited. It will almost always be possible for a defending rook or some other piece to check the enemy

king back and forth forever. However, that is not allowed. That is the reason that we said back in Chapter Two that if perpetual check were a draw then almost every game would be a draw.

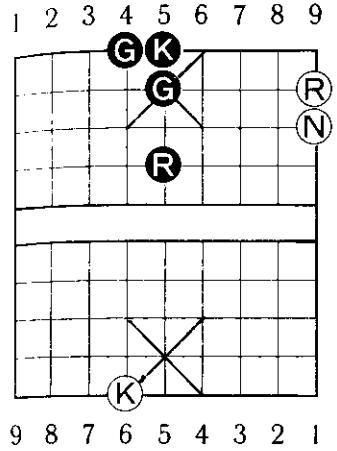
In the final position just before checkmate in this example, Black could have checked with R9+9 and then started checking the red king back and forth forever. In an official tournament game, the arbiter would have stopped him after two cycles. Thus, **the possibility that Black can start checking is irrelevant and is not even discussed in these examples.**

Diagram 83 is the twin to Dia. 82. The solution is **1. P4+1 check, K6+1; 2. P3+1 check, K6-1; 3. P3=4 check!, K6+1; 4. N1-3 check, K6-1; 5. N3+2 check** and wins because the king and rook are forked by Red's knight. As you can see, these endgames are in some ways quite similar to those found in international chess.

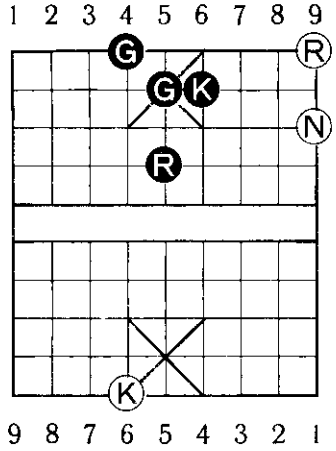
Diagram 85 is much more difficult. In comes from a book on the endgame by Wang Jia Liang of Harbin, China, who was born in 1933 and is a veteran grandmaster of Chinese chess. He has now retired from active play and works as a trainer in Singapore. Although the solution to Dia. 85 is not easy, it involves ideas which come up in actual games and was selected for that reason.

Red starts by checking, forcing the Black king towards the middle with the moves **1. N1+3, K5=6; 2. R1+1, K6+1; 3. N3-1.** This last is one of the key moves. We

have reached Dia. 86. Red threatens N1+2 check. If the king comes back, Red can play N2-3, forking the king and rook. If the king goes forward, Red has R1-2 mate.



Dia. 85

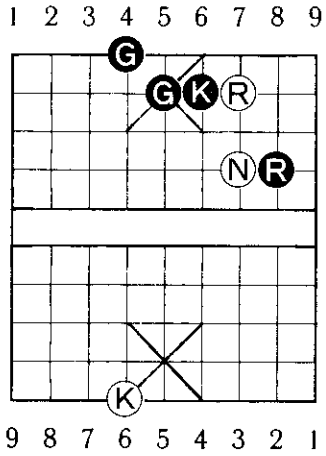


Dia. 86

There are now two variations. The first is **3. . . . . , R5=8; 4. R1=3.** Red threatens a mate which comes up quite frequently. There is even a name for it in Chinese. He threatens to play 5. N1-3 check, K6+1; 6. R3-2 check, K6-1; 7. R3+1 check reaching Dia. 87. Now, regardless of what Black does, there is checkmate on the next move. If Black goes forward with K6+1, Red mates with 8. R3=4. If Black retreats with K6-1, Red mates with 8. R3+1.

Black defends against this checkmate by playing **4. . . ., R8-1**, blocking the knight. Red plays **5. N1+2.** This move threatens to move the rook with discovered check by the

knight. In particular, Red threatens to take the guard. Black defends against that by **5. . . . . , G5-6.** Now, Red double checks with **6. R3-1,** forcing Black to play **K6+1.**

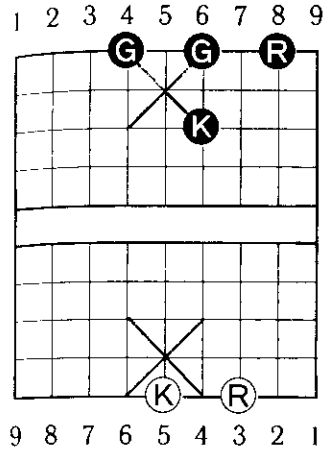


Dia. 87

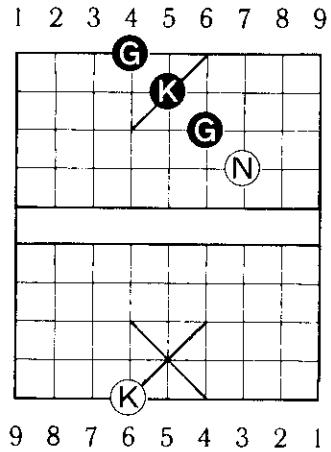
The next move is the key move. Red quietly plays **7. K6=5** and after **R8-2,** capturing the knight, Red retreats with **8. R3-8,** reaching Dia. 88. **Black resigns,** because there is no defense to R3=4 checkmate.

The second variation from Dia. 86 starts with **3. . . . . , K6+1; 4. R1=3, K6=5; 5. R3-2, G5+6.** Black played these last moves in order to stop the checkmate shown in Dia. 87. However, Red now plays the key move, **6. R3-1.** The idea behind this move is that Black is now forced to trade rooks. If instead Black moves his rook forward, Red will be able to shift his rook to the sixth line followed by

knight check. Therefore, play continues with **6. . . . , R5=7; 7. N1-3, K5-1** reaching Dia. 89.



Dia. 88



Dia. 89

Now, we have reached a classic position: a knight against two guards. In just four more moves, Red will be able to finish Black off. **8. K6+1.** A tempo move. **8. . . . . , K5-1.** There was no other legal move. **9. N3+2, G4+5.** If Black retreats the other guard by G6-5, Red has a win by stalemate with K6=5. Check this out. **10. K6-1, G5+4.** Again, Black had no other legal move. **11. N2-4 check** capturing the guard. **Black resigns.**

There are other, relatively minor, variations to this endgame. It is recommended that you play around with it, until you are satisfied that you can checkmate against any possible defense.

Chapter Ten

About the Openings

Another vast subject in Chinese chess is the study of the openings. There are almost as many books about the openings in Chinese chess as there are about the openings in international chess. Currently, there are around sixty opening books in print in China alone. There are certainly more openings, simply because there are more legal moves and plausible variations in the average position in Chinese chess than there are in international chess.

Fortunately, a new player in Chinese chess has a limited objective. He does not want to win in the opening. He merely wants to avoid losing. It is quite possible to achieve this limited goal (although sometimes just barely) because the same ideas and themes keep coming up even in much different openings.

It must be emphasized, however, that the openings are of critical importance. This is demonstrated by the fact that **in high level competition between equal opponents, Red wins about fifty percent of the games, with the remainder being divided about equally between draws and losses.** In other words, **in tournament competition, the player of Red is roughly twice as likely to win as the player of Black.**

Until around twenty or thirty years ago, everyone agreed that the best first move was the center cannon move of 1. C2=5. That was played in about 80% of the tournament games. Now, players are trying other moves. Still, the center cannon is played in around 50% of the games, with other moves dividing up the rest.

Actually, almost every legal first move is playable. About the only moves that are really bad are moving forward the rook, because then the opponent's cannon would capture the knight, and moving forward the king, which would be a good way to commit suicide.

Popular alternative first moves include advancing the third or seventh line pawn, bringing out the knight, centralizing the bishop and moving the cannon to somewhere else than to the center.

Note that the initial position in Chinese chess is symmetrical, unlike the initial position in international chess. Any first move from the right side of the board could also be played from the left side. It makes no difference if a player opens with 1. C2=5 or 1. C8=5. It happens that a majority of players make their first move from the right side, but there is no rule or convention about this.

One point which must be mentioned is that in defending against the central cannon, on the first move, one must either protect the attacked center pawn or else put something in between that pawn and the king. Otherwise, the game is lost.

This is obviously a critical and important point. Every now and then, a player goes to sleep and something like this happens: **1. C2=5, P7+1 ????; 2. C5+4, Black resigns.**

The reason Black resigns is that there is no real way to prevent Red from eventually playing moves like C8+2 followed by C8=5 checkmate. Black could try moving his king forward, but is not likely to survive for long.

There are plenty of moves to defend against the central cannon, however. Among them are N8+7, N2+3, B3+5, B7+5, G4+5, G6+5, C2=5 and C8=5. Also, every now and then a wise guy comes along and defends with C8+1 followed by C2=8, seizing control of Red's second line. This is playable but not really to be recommended.

Logically, the best first move would seem to be 1. B3+5. With this move, the two bishops protect each other and also the two cannons protect each other. The king is safer. Although this move is a bit slow, it is a solid move which most players will want to get in anyway. The only problem with this move is that it prevents the cannon from occupying the center. However, the center cannon move is not always effective, anyway. Black quickly fortifies his center by bringing up his knights, bishop and guard and the cannon sometimes gives up and moves to another line. Perhaps the real reason for the popularity of the central cannon is that the Chinese are naturally aggressive and just want to go out and try to kill their opponent right away, without regard for the consequences.

Interestingly, the most prominent player who plays the central bishop is Hu Long Hua, the best player in the world. You might think that if the best player in the world plays a certain opening, others would take it up as well. However, until now, Mr. Hu seems to be the main one who plays an initial B3+5.

Advancing the third or seventh file pawn is more popular than the central bishop. However, if you start this way, you can expect to get attacked immediately. A typical opening might go as follows: **1. P7+1, C2=3; 2. N2+3, P3+1; 3. N8+9, P3+1; 4. C8=5, N8+7; 5. C2+2, P7+1.**

An even more radical approach is an immediate pawn sacrifice on the first move. Nobody recommends this, but it is quite dangerous against anyone who does not know the refutation. **1. P7+1, P3+1!; 2. P7+1, B3+5; 3. P7+1?.** This is a mistake. Once Red tries to hang onto his pawn, Black gains the advantage. Red needed to leave the pawn where it was and try to force Black to spend valuable time capturing it with the bishop. **3. . . . . , N2+4; 4. P7=6, R1=3.** Now, Red is in serious trouble. His bishop is attacked and none of his pieces are developed. His pawn cannot advance further because it will be captured by the cannon. Eventually, Black will probably recover the sacrificed pawn with a big advantage.

On around the third move, Red should have played

C8=7. Otherwise, Black will play N2+4, followed by R1=3 and R3+4, recovering the sacrificed pawn with a good game.

Against an initial knight move, the opponent will probably push up the opposing pawn to keep the knight in. A typical opening might go as follows: **1. N2+3, P7+1; 2. P7+1, N8+7; 3. N8+7, N2+3; 4. N7+6, B3+5; 5. C8=7, R9+1; 6. R1+1, C8+1.**

Against the central cannon, the best defense is the Fan Gong Ma, which was already discussed in chapter four. A typical opening might go: **1. C2=5, N2+3; 2. N2+3, C8=6; 3. R1=2, N8+7; 4. P7+1, P7+1; 5. R2+6, G4+5; 6. R2=3, R9+2; 7. C8=7, B3+5; 8. N8+9, C2+4; 9. P5+1, R1=4; 10. R9=8, C2=4; 11. C5+4, C6+3; 12. C5-1, R4+5; 13. C7=5, R4=5; 14. R8+3.** This position is quite messy, but typical of Chinese chess, especially in games played at a higher level.

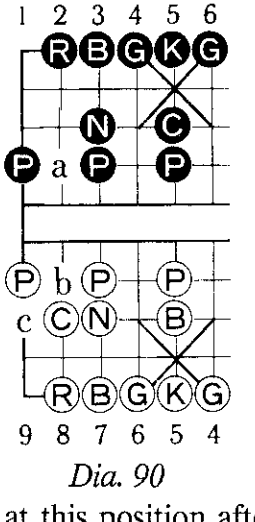
Another excellent way to counter the central cannon is to answer in kind with **1. C2=5, C8=5; 2. N2+3, N8+7.** Now, if Red plays 3. R1=2, Black answers with R9+1, but if Red plays 3. R1+1, Black answers R9=8. The reason for this was explained back in Chapter Five. If play continues with **3. R1=2, R9+1,** Black will try to get in R9=4, followed by R4+7, with a good counter-attack.

One sacrifice which everyone will eventually encounter comes at the first move: **1. C2=5, B3+5.** Almost everyone who sees it for the first time will immediately

play **2. C5+4,** capturing the offered pawn with check. By now, the reader of this book should be able to figure out that this is bad. Black will simply defend against the check with **2. . . . . , G4+5.** Then the knight will come out and attack the cannon, driving it back with a gain in time. Red's cannon will be misplaced, being in front of the pawn rather than behind it, and Black should gain the advantage. Instead of taking the pawn on the second move, Red should have just developed his pieces, ignoring the offered pawn.

One good thing about the openings in Chinese chess is that they do not have to be memorized to the same degree as the openings in international chess. You will not be told, for example, that it is absolutely necessary to commit to memory the first 26 moves of the Ruy Lopez. (Actually, they rarely tell beginners in international chess about this. This secret is supposed to be kept from beginners until much later.)

Instead of memorizing fixed sequences of moves, Chinese chess players become familiar with patterns. Consider, for example, the pattern in Dia. 90. This, of course, is not a complete position. Half of the board has been left off to emphasize the point that it is not the whole position we are concerned about, just the pattern of these particular pieces. This pattern is a common occurrence.



Dia. 90

We have arrived at this position after Black's rook attacked Red's cannon. Red could have defended this cannon in any number of ways, but the best way is often to put the rook behind it, as he has done here.

In this type of position sometimes it is Red's turn to move; sometimes it is Black's. We will consider both possibilities.

If it is Red's turn to move, he might move the cannon forward to point 'a'. This threatens to play C8=5, capturing the pawn with check. In that case, the knight cannot capture the cannon, because then Red's rook will take Black's rook. Note that this combination will work only if Black's center pawn is protected only by the knight.

Another thing Red might do is bring his cannon two points forward to guard the river. Among other things,

this keeps Black's rook out of point 'b'. Depending on the situation elsewhere on the board, Red might be planning to shift his cannon over to another line, thereby bringing about an exchange of rooks. Note that this idea will only work if Red's knight continues to defend the rook. Therefore, the knight is required to stay where it is until this plan has been executed.

If it is Black's move, he will want to stop both of these plans and therefore will move his rook to point 'b', blocking the cannon. Red will now probably move forward his seventh line pawn with P7+1. Note that Red's ninth line pawn (the rook pawn) is en prise. However, Red is happy if Black wastes valuable time capturing that pawn.

Sometimes, this formation is reached, except that Red's knight is on point 'c'. In that case, Black should not advance to point 'b' with the rook, because the red cannon will move over with C8=7. Now, the seventh line pawn is defended by the knight. It would be a mistake for Black to capture the rook pawn here, because then his rook would be sealed out of the game for a long time. (Note that on 'c', Red's knight is defended by the bishop). Therefore, Black would be essentially forced to exchange rooks, and Red would have gained because of trading his passive rook for Black's active rook. This is the same point discussed earlier in Chapter Five with Dias. 60 and 61.

Chapter Eleven

More Games

Until now, we have discussed various aspects of the game, but we have not shown much in the way of actual games, as they are fought and played by actual players. Now, we are going to make up for that.

First, I am going to show one of my own games. Although I am not by any stretch of the imagination any sort of world class player, this particular game has a number of advantages. It is a typical game by average players (even on the Chinese standard). Grandmaster games tend to be rather mystifying. It also involves tactics which come up frequently, especially in games by average players. Some important points I want to explain about the opening, middle and endgame I have saved for this particular game. Also, most importantly, this game has been analyzed by a number of top masters and even grandmasters, so I am confident that what I say about this game is correct.

This was played as an exhibition game in Singapore before a crowd of about 200 spectators in connection with the Guinness Asia Cup Chinese Chess Championship. The moves of the game were flashed on a computerized demonstration screen as they were played, with move by

move commentary given over a microphone by Leung Lee Shing, one of the leading players of Hong Kong, alternating with a top player from Singapore and a number of other prominent players who happened to be present at the time. Even Grandmaster Li Lai Chen, regarded as the second strongest player in the world, offered commentary on this game.

Why did a game by average players attract such attention and interest? Because both of these average players happened to be non-Chinese. My opponent, Winston Williams, is also a chess master. He has held a FIDE rating of 2220, has played on the Singapore chess team, and has represented Singapore in international chess events. This, therefore, is possibly a game between two of the strongest known non-Chinese players of Chinese chess.

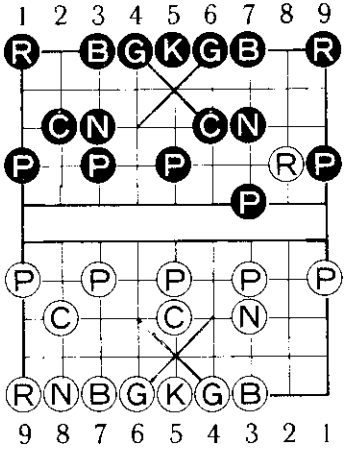
My opponent won the draw for color and therefore played the red pieces.

Winston Williams vs. Sloan, Singapore, Dec. 19, 1988.

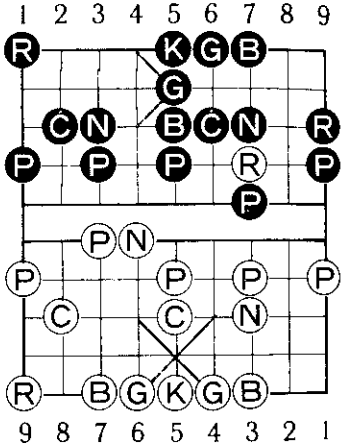
1. C2=5, N2+3; 2. N2+3, C8=6; 3. R1=2, N8+7; 4. R2+6, P7+1. Now, we have reached Dia. 91. Red has played a common opening sequence. Black has responded with the "Fan Gong Ma", one of the most popular defenses. You might call the resulting position the "Ruy Lopez" of Chinese chess. You will find this position discussed in most standard opening books. **5. P7+1, B3+5; 6.**

N8+7, G4+5?; 7. R2=3, R9+2; 8. N7+6. See Dia. 92.

Black's sixth move was an error. Instead, Black should have brought up the cannon with 6. . . . . , C2+4. He must do this before Red moves the knight up to the river. The reason for this is that the cannon advance prevents the red rook from moving onto the third line, because then the black cannon will capture Red's third line pawn, forking the bishop and rook. We saw an example of this same fork back in Dia. 70.



Dia. 91



Dia. 92

However, it is now too late for Black to bring up his cannon. In Dia. 92, if Black plays 8. . . . . , C2+4, Red responds with N6+4, attacking the knight and defending the third line pawn (the bishop pawn) simultaneously. Notice that this basic type of knight maneuver was discussed back in Dias. 65 and 67.

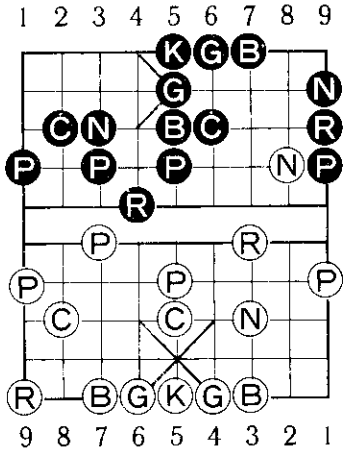
8. . . . . , R1=4; 9. N6+4, N7-9. Because of Black's opening error, he has been forced back into a passive position. However, he is not by any means lost. A good thing about Chinese chess is that even if a player makes a bad move in the opening, he rarely gets a lost position. Here, Black has compensation in other areas.

10. P3+1, P7+1; 11. R3-2, R4+4; 12. N4+2. Diagram 93. Already, Black is starting to recover. His rook is now active. The red knight is not only attacking Black's knight but, more importantly, it is threatening to fork with N2+3 check. However, Black has a simple defense to both threats. If you do not see it right away, please keep staring at the board until you do, because it is quite important to be able to see moves like this.

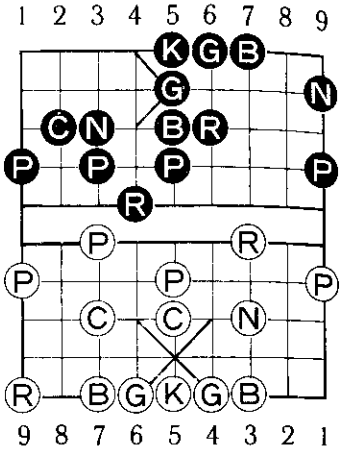
12. . . . . , R9=8. The rook blocks the knight, thereby stopping both threats. Also, now the red knight itself is blocked and the black knight is threatening to capture it, not the other way around. This blocking and unblocking theme is one of the most common features of any game of Chinese chess.

13. N2+4, R8=6; 14. C8=7. Diagram 94. Now, Black has fully recovered from the inferior position he had in Dia. 92. Red has been forced to exchange his active knight for Black's cannon. Both of Black's rooks are now actively placed and his knight is ready to come into the game by attacking the rook. The only problem which

Black still has is that his cannon and knight on his second and third lines are still inactive.



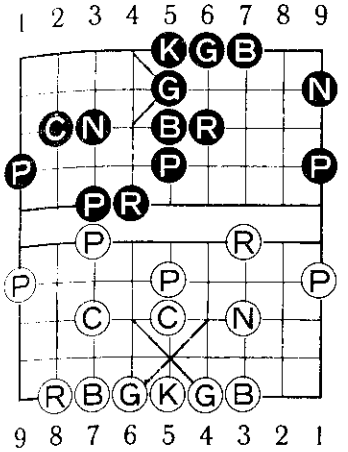
Dia. 93



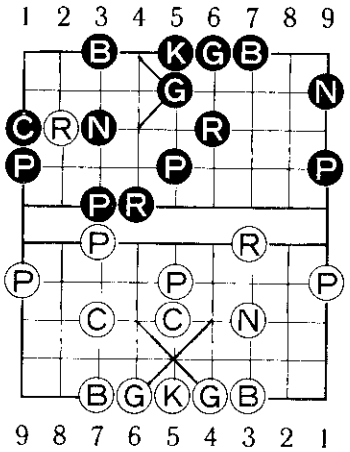
Dia. 94

Grandmaster Li Lai Chen, who was watching the game on the demonstration board while it was in progress, commented that now Black needed only to play 14. . . . ., R4 = 2. This would seize complete control of Red's eighth line and it might take a long time for Red's rook to get into the game.

Instead, Black became greedy and decided just to activate his remaining two inactive pieces without any consideration about what Red might do. **14. . . . . , P3 + 1?.** This is a terrible blunder. Black was assuming that Red would take the pawn immediately, in which case Black would recapture with the rook, attacking the cannon.



Dia. 95



Dia. 96

15. R9 = 8. Diagram 95. Now, Black has lost his advantage and is in deep trouble. Black's cannon is attacked by the rook. If the cannon retreats with C2-2, Red wins a piece with 16. P7 + 1, R4 = 3; 17. C7 + 5, R3-2; 18. R8 + 9 check. If the cannon moves two points forward where it is protected by the knight with C2 + 2, Red also wins a piece with 16. P7 + 1, R4 = 3; 17. C7 + 5, R3-2; 18. R8 + 5, capturing the cannon.

Most of the audience thought that the game was over and some even started to wander away. I went into a deep think here and it was my good fortune that I found a way out of this horrible mess.

15. . . . . , C2 = 1; 16. R8 + 7, B5-3. Diagram 96. Look at the ingenious defense! The bishop comes back to defend

the cannon while, at the same time, opening the third rank so that the rook defends the knight. This was the only way Black had to keep from losing a piece.

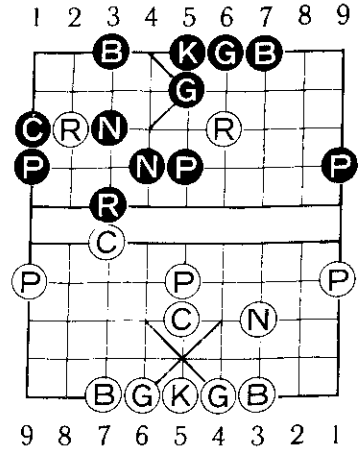
Actually, it is not a great surprise that such a defense existed. Chinese chess is a resilient game. There are often fantastic defenses to even the most indefensible looking positions. It is perfectly respectable to be stuck in a long term defensive position in Chinese chess. If you are in a bad or even a lost position, just keep doggedly finding ways to defend and keep the game going. Eventually, your opponent will often blunder and give you a chance to win.

17. P7+1. Most of the commentators severely criticized this move. Red should have played 17. C7+3. That move threatens C7+4, capturing the bishop, followed by R8=9, capturing the cannon. If Black tries to defend by bringing in the bishop with B7+5, the rook is cut off from the defense of the knight. The game would continue with 18. R8=7, B5+3; 19. R7+2, capturing the bishop with check, followed by P7+1, capturing the other bishop. The important thing is not that Red wins two bishops, but that Black's king is exposed to threats of checkmate.

As it happened, however, Black has a defense to this move as well, which even the commentators did not see right away. After 17. C7+3, Black can play R6=4, which threatens FR+5 check, followed by BR+6 checkmate. Red must defend against this threat with 18. G4+5, but

then Black can play B7+5, defending the other bishop and attacking the cannon. The cannon in fact is nearly trapped.

So, it turns out that Black was not lost after his 14th move after all. Perhaps the question mark should be removed.



Dia. 97

17. . . . . , R4=3; 18. C7+2, N9+8. Black attacks the rook, finally bringing his knight into the game. **19. R3=2,** N8+6. Attacking the knight again. **20. R2=4, N6-4; 21.** R4+3. See Dia. 97.

This sequence of moves got the audience excited. Grandmaster Li Lai Chen commented, "It is amazing that a person who is not Chinese can play such moves." While

I was naturally flattered by this, I could not understand what the fuss was all about.

Later, it was explained to me that the Chinese have a lot of trouble maneuvering their knights. They were amazed that I could make three knight moves in a row, each time attacking a rook, and finally end up forking a rook and a cannon. They didn't seem to realize that this sort of maneuver is the simplest thing imaginable for an experienced player of international chess. I have been making moves like this since I was a baby. Fortunately, these moves did not in any way involve a cannon. Otherwise, I would probably have messed it up completely.

21. . . . . , G5+6. This was the critical move in the game. Black has four different legal captures. These are: N4+3, N4-2, R3+1 and G5+6. N4+3 is unplayable because Red answers with R8=7, winning a rook. (R4=7 would be a blunder because of 22. C1=3 and Black has a strong attack). R3+1 could be answered with 22. R8=7, G5+6; 23. R7-3, N4+3. Most of the attention centered on the possibility of N4-2. After that, Red simply moves away his rook.

After a lengthy discussion in Chinese, the commentators finally decided that the move I played was actually best. Unfortunately, I cannot understand Chinese well, so I cannot tell you what they said.

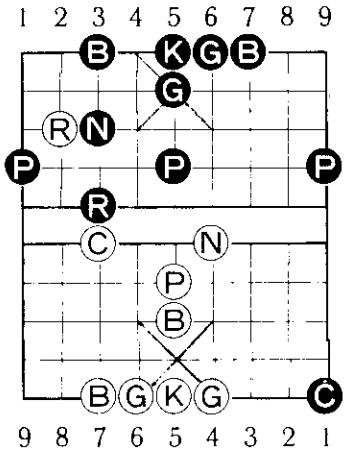
22. C7=5, N4+5? This was a mistake. I still can't see cannon moves, so I forgot that Red can recapture with a

cannon. Black should just defend against the check by playing B7+5, forcing Red to move the rook. Fortunately, my oversight was not serious.

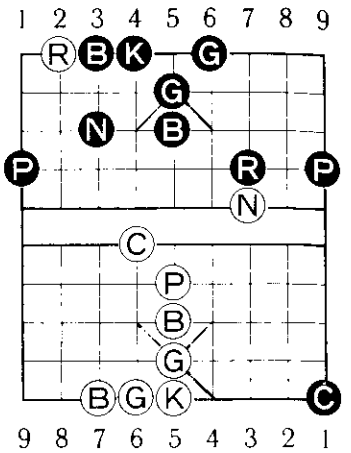
23. C5+2, G6-5; 24. B3+5, C1+4. Black has been able to capture this pawn for a long time. This pawn is often available, but it is usually a mistake to capture it in the middle game, because after the cannon captures this pawn, it is left out of the game. However, here, Black captures this pawn, not to win a lowly pawn, but to get his cannon into one of the corners to threaten mate. The most dangerous place for the cannon is the opponent's corner.

25. N3+4, C1=9; 26. C5=7, C9+3 check. Diagram 98. Now, we have reached the endgame. Although Black is two pawns up, it does not look at first like he will be able to put these pawns to much use. Actually, the advantage of these two pawns is nearly decisive. They may move slowly, but they are virtually unstoppable and eventually will strangle the red king.

27. G4+5, N3+4; 28. N4+5, R3-1; 29. N5+6, R3-2. Red was just bluffing. He was trying to frighten Black, but he was not really threatening anything. Therefore, Black should have played 29. . . . . , R3=8, threatening to penetrate to the back rank. The bluff worked. Black wasted time defending against a non-existent threat instead of finishing off the game.



Dia. 98



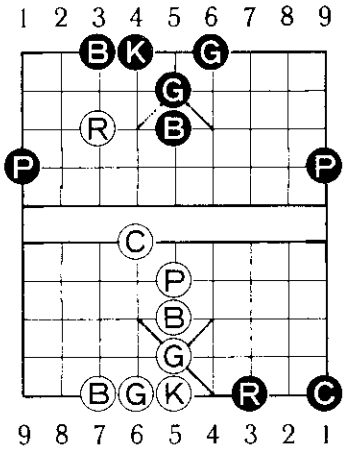
Dia. 99

30. C7=5, B7+5; 31. N6-5, R3+2; 32. N5-3, R3=7. It was not legal for Black to take the knight with the bishop, because of check by the cannon. **33. R8+2, K5=4.** Red was threatening to play R8=7 checkmate!! Black neatly sidesteps this threat by moving his king. It is important to be alert to the possibility of checkmate at all times. These keep coming up, especially in simple positions like this. **34. C5=6, N4-3.** Getting out of check. See Dia. 99. Although Black's king appears to be in a precarious position, in fact it is perfectly safe, as long as Black is careful.

Black's last move has been carefully and, fortunately, correctly calculated. Black is forcing a trade of knights because both the rook and the knight are attacked at the same time. Red cannot defend the knight with the rook

with R8-4, because then Black's knight captures the rook. Black has played this line because he sees that after the exchange of knights, he will pick up the cannon.

35. R8-2, R7+1; 36. R8=7, R7+5. See Dia. 100. The point. Black gives double check with the rook and the cannon. Red has only one legal move. He must bring back the guard. Then, Black retreats his rook, giving discovered check by the black cannon while simultaneously attacking the red cannon. Red must block this check. (If Red advances with the king instead, the black rook gives checkmate). Then, Black captures the cannon.



Dia. 100

37. G5-4, R7-4; 38. B5-3, R7=4. Red tried to give away his bishop here to distract Black from taking the cannon, but Black refused to take the bait. **39. G6+5, P9+1; 40.**

R7-5, C9-4; 41. R7=9, R4-2; 42. P5+1, R4=5; 43. P5+1, R5+1; 44. R9+4, C9=2. Here, Black could have threatened the mate which has been discussed so frequently in this book. Black had 44. . . . . , C9=5 check. If Red answered with 45. B3+5, Black would play R5=4 with the mate threat of R4+5. As you can see, this is virtually identical to the mate shown in Dia. 73. Red could still hold out by defending on the back rank with 45. B7+5, R5=4; 46. R9-6. However, after that, he could do nothing but mark time while Black slowly brought up his single remaining pawn to finish him off. (It is important to note that in spite of being a cannon ahead, Black also needs this extra pawn. Otherwise, the game is a draw.)

This game was played under tournament rules. My flag had already fallen once and the score keeper was counting down the minutes until the final time forfeit. (This procedure will be explained under the section dealing with tournament rules.) Therefore, my main objective here was to make a bunch of moves quickly and avoid both blunders and a time forfeit. As a result, the the game became rather sloppy. Eventually, on move 58, I broke through and won both of Red's guards. Red resigned.

There will no doubt be some readers who will not feel completely satisfied just to play over a game by Sam Sloan. Therefore, we have just what the doctor ordered: a game by Hu Long Hua, the best player in the world. This was one of the most profound and difficult games which

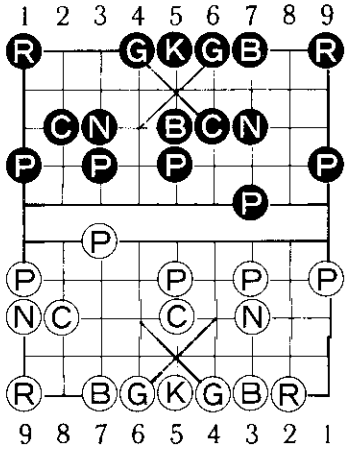
anyone has seen. In it, Mr. Hu sacrifices a cannon for just two insignificant looking pawns (or who knows, maybe he just blundered). Slowly, he collects two more pawns and then the four pawns together push towards the enemy king like an army of termites. His opponent is the perennial champion of Hong Kong. This game was also played in Singapore at the Guinness Asian Cup Championship.

Chen Jian Yun (Hong Kong) vs. Hu Long Hua (China), Singapore, December 17, 1988.

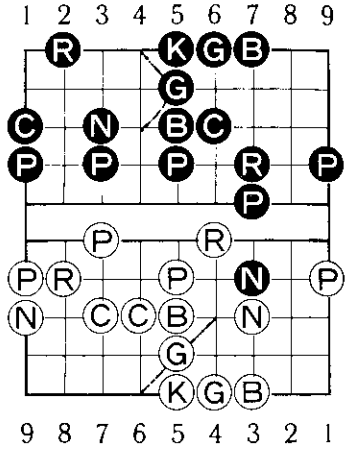
1. C2=5, N2+3; 2. P7+1, C8=6; 3. N2+3, N8+7; 4. R1=2, P7+1; 5. N8+9, B3+5. See Dia. 101. Red has opened with the Central Cannon and Hu has defended with the Fan Gong Ma. It will be noticed that this position is almost the same as that reached in the previous game. **6. C8=7, N7+6; 7. R9=8, C2=1; 8. R8+3, G4+5; 9. G6+5, R9+2; 10. C5=6, R9=7; 11. R2+4, N6+7; 12. B7+5, R7+1; 13. R2=4, R1=2.** Diagram 102. So far, there is nothing particularly noteworthy about this game. Red has moved his cannon away from the central line, admitting the futility of his opening. Black has captured a not very valuable pawn, or, at least, the pawn is not very valuable right now. Black now offers an exchange of rooks.

14. R8+6, N3-2; 15. C7+1, N7-8; 16. P7+1, P3+1; 17. R4=8, N2+4; 18. N3+4. Notice that on move 16

Red sacrificed his seventh line pawn just to be able to shift over his rook to threaten the enemy king. Hu now has two pawns, but Red has an attack. With the current move, Red forks Black's rook and knight, but his actual plan is to bring his knight over to his left side to help attack the king. **18. . . ., R7=8; 19. N4+6, P5+1; 20. C6+6, R8=4.** Dia. 103 (next page).



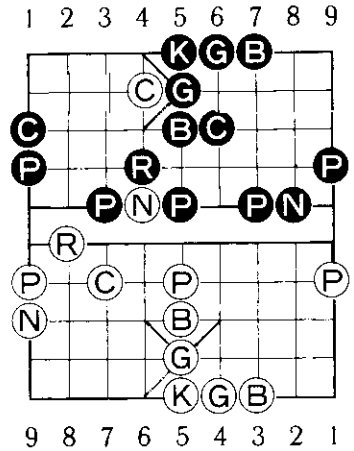
Dia. 101



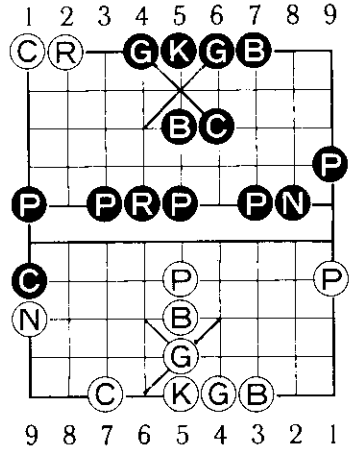
Dia. 102

Now, the fun begins. Red has captured a knight, but Black recovers it by forking the cannon and knight with the rook. Now, Red is going to put his cannon in the corner (remember, the corner is the most dangerous spot for the cannon) and start threatening mate. **21. R8+5, G5-4; 22. C6=9, R4+1; 23. C9+1, P1+1; 24. C7-3, C1+4.** Diagram 104 (next page). Here it is. Red was

threatening to play 25. C7=6, followed by R8=6 check, winning the rook. Black gets out of this threat by sacrificing a cannon. Since there is nobody in the world better than Mr. Hu, nobody but he can say whether this sacrifice was just a desperate effort to get himself out of a bad position, or if it was part of a profound plan he made many moves ago.



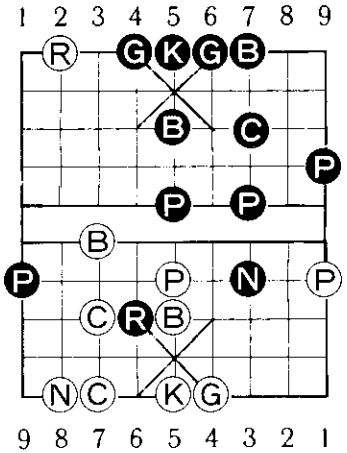
Dia. 103



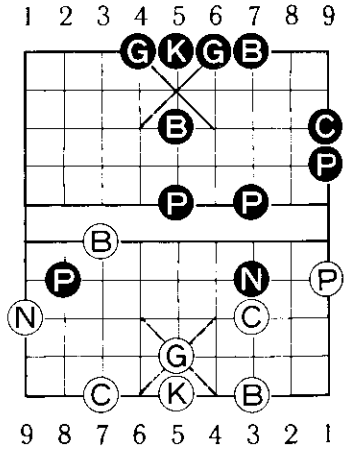
Dia. 104

25. C9-6, P3+1. Hu sacrifices one pawn to dislodge the bishop so that another can advance. After capturing this pawn, this bishop will never move again for the rest of the game. Now, the pawns start marching one by one. **26. B5+7, P1+1; 27. C9=7, P1+1; 28. N9-8, R4+2; 29. FC-1; C6=7; 30. B3+5, N8+7; 31. G5+6, R4+1.** Diagram 105.

Red gives away one guard for nothing, just to make more space for his king to live. Otherwise, Mr. Hu was threatening N7+9 followed by N9+7 mate. (Note that the knight would be in the stable). **32. G4+5, R4-1; 33. B5-3, R4=5; 34. FC=3, R5=2.** This move forces a trade of rooks, because both the red rook and the red knight are attacked by the black rook. Hu wants to reduce the number of pieces on the board, because the less pieces on the board, the stronger his pawns will be. **35. R8-6, P1=2; 36. N8+9, C7=9.** Diagram 106. Now that Black has achieved a trade of rooks, he is going for the last pawn. In spite of having one piece less, it is unlikely that Black will lose now because he has both guards and both bishops and, without pawns, his opponent can almost never mate.

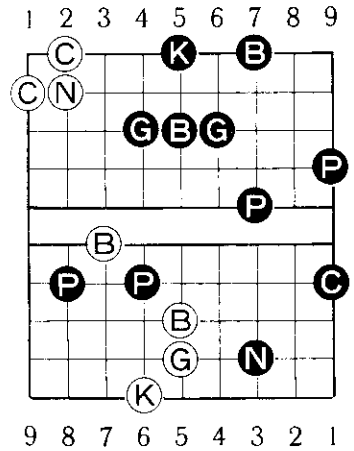


Dia. 105

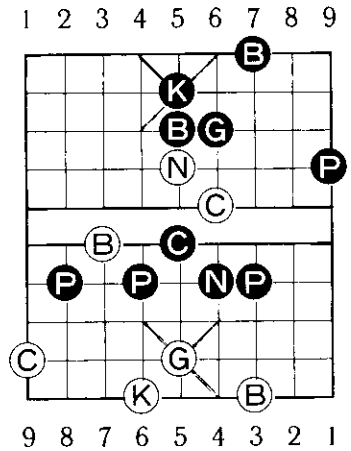


Dia. 106

37. N9+8, P5+1; 38. C3=9, G4+5; 39. C9+7, C9+4; 40. B3+5, G5+4; 41. N8+7, G6+5; 42. C7=9, N7+9; 43. BC+4, P5+1; 44. BC=8, G5+6. Red was just threatening checkmate. (I hope you noticed that by now.) Black moves his guards up just to make space for his king. Actually, Black does not care about his guards any more. He wants to get rid of them, since he is being attacked by two cannons. **45. C8+5, K5+1; 46. C9-1, N9+7; 47. K5=6, P5=4; 48. N7+8, K5-1.** Diagram 107. The interesting thing about this is that Mr. Hu is being repeatedly threatened with mate by the full force of two cannons plus one knight, but he does not seem to be the slightest bit worried about this. In fact, Red has no way to checkmate as long as Black is careful and does not slip.

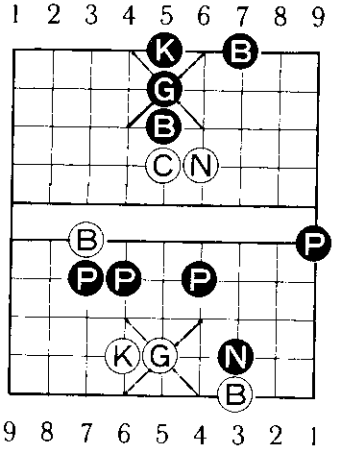


Dia. 107

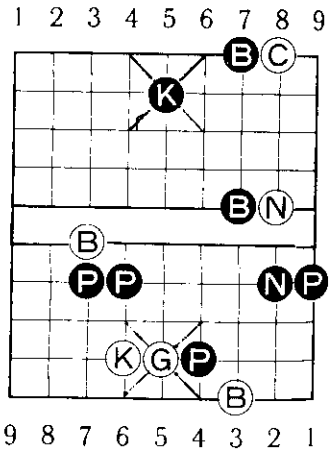


Dia. 108

49. N8-6, K5=6; 50. N6+8, C9-1; 51. N8+6, B5-3; 52. N6-7, B3+5; 53. N7-5, C9=5; 54. B5-3, P7+1; 55. C9+1, K6+1; 56. C8-4, P7+1; 57. C8=4, K6=5; 58. C9-8, N7-6. Diagram 108. Now, the game is drawing to a close as Red seems unable to find a way to stop the march of the pawns. Unfortunately, the score sheet is also becoming illegible. Incidentally, I am not copying this game out of a book, because it hasn't been published anywhere yet. Instead, I have the actual score sheet, hand written in Chinese. Already, I have corrected numerous errors made by the person who wrote down these moves. Since I have a partially legible score sheet and I know the final position and since I also know that the game ended on move 77, I will do my best to work out the intervening moves.



Dia. 109



Dia. 110

59. N5-4, K5-1; 60. C9+5, N6+7; 61. C9-5, C5=4; 62. C9=6, C4+3; 63. K6+1, P2=3; 64. C4=5, G6-5; 65. C5+1, P9+1; 66. N4+2, P7=6; 67. N2+4, P9+1. I still think I have the score right. We will celebrate with a diagram. See Dia. 109. **68. N4+5, N7-8; 69. N5-3, K5=4; 70. N3-4, P9+1; 71. C5=7, K4=5; 72. C7=5, K5=6; 73. C5=1, B5+7; 74. N4+3, K6=5; 75. N3-2, P6+1; 76. C1+3, K5+1; 77. C1=2, P6+1 Red Resigns.** Black threatens to play P6=5 check, followed by P4+1 and P4+1 checkmate. If instead the guard now moves, then Black checks with the knight followed by checkmate. Black only used 59 minutes for this entire game, whereas Red used 95. The final position is shown in Dia. 110.

You will see that in spite of being the best player in the world, Mr. Hu still follows the same basic principles I have tried to explain in earlier chapters. If you study this game carefully, you should be able to figure out the reasons for most of the moves.

Chapter Twelve

Who's Hu in Chinese Chess

If you decide to take up Chinese chess on a serious basis, you will want to know about the leading personalities of the game. This makes for a rather long list, because there are so many people who have essentially devoted their lives to Chinese chess.

The leading personality is Hu Long Hua of Shanghai. He is the Bobby Fischer of Chinese chess. His career closely parallels that of Fischer. Born in 1945, he won the All-China Championship for the first time in 1960, when he was only 15 years old. At that time, this victory was regarded as a bit lucky. Hu then proved it was no accident by winning the championship a total of ten times in a row.

By comparison, Bobby Fischer, who was born in 1943, earned the grandmaster title by finishing eighth in the interzonal tournament in Yugoslavia in 1958. That result arguably made him the tenth best player in the world at age 15, because the world champion and the leading challenger were exempted from the interzonal. However, there was no FIDE rating system back then, so we cannot say exactly how strong Fischer really was.

It is a matter of opinion as to whether being the All-China Champion (which is, in effect, the world championship) of Chinese chess is greater or lesser than being the tenth player in the world at international chess. However, Fischer's achievement was not only that he was strong, but also that he came from essentially a non-chess playing country at the time, namely the United States of America. If Fischer had been a Russian, it would not have been such a big deal.

Hu Long Hua proceeded to win the All-China championship in the years 1960, 62, 64, 65, 66, 74, 75, 77, 78 and 79, which was every year that it was played. (In one of those years he tied for first.) The gap in the years 1966 to 1974 was caused by the cultural revolution. No Chinese chess tournaments were held in China during this period. Mr. Hu had a job cleaning and maintaining a swimming pool in Shanghai.

Recently, a number of young players have emerged and Hu is no longer head and shoulders above the rest. The first grandmaster of the post-Hu period was Liu Da Hua. Born in 1950, he won the All-China championship in 1980 and 1981. After that, an even younger player, Li Lai Chen, born in 1960, took the title in 1982. Hu won in 1983 and Li Lai Chen won again in 1984. Hu regained the title in 1985. The youngest grandmaster, Lu Chin (b. 1962) of Guangzhou (Canton), won in 1986. Then came Li Lai Chen in 1987 and Lu Chin again in 1988.

Since these tournaments have recently been conducted on a Swiss system, there is a certain amount of luck in-

volved. Everybody says that Hu Long Hua is still the best player, although they concede that he does not study much any more. Li Lai Chen, ranked number two, is said to be the hardest worker at the game.

It is fairly recently that the China Chinese Chess Association has started to adopt some of the practices of international chess. They now award the titles of grandmaster and master and have started a rating system. However, only about 140 players in all of China have ratings. The highest rated player is Hu Long Hua, with a rating of 2585.

There is an informal rating system in China, in addition to the official FIDE-type system which is just getting started. In this system, first grade is roughly equivalent to class B, second grade to class A, third grade to expert, and fourth grade to master. Fifth grade players are Hu Long Hua and the other grandmasters.

The criteria for being awarded the grandmaster title is that a player must win the All-China championship once or finish in the top two twice or in the top three three times. This is a tough standard, since Hu has almost always won. Only eight players have been awarded the grandmaster title and only about 30 have the master title. Three grandmasters are veterans from before the Hu era.

Since there are now a total of 267 grandmasters of international chess, plus around 800 international chess masters, it is clearly much harder to be a grandmaster of

Chinese chess than it is to be one of international chess.

The five active grandmasters of Chinese chess are Hu Long Hua, Li Lai Chen, Liu Da Hua, Lu Chin and Zhou Go Long (b. 1961). The retired grandmasters are Yang Guan Lin (b. 1925), Wang Jia Liang (b. 1933) and Li Yi Ting (b. 1937).

Two of the three inactive grandmasters still play, although officially they are retired. One of these is Yang Guan Lin of Guangzhou. He won the All-China championship in 1956, 57 and 59 and tied with Hu Long Hua in 1962. The other is Wang Jia Liang of Harbin. He finished second in the All-China championship in 1956, 57 and 59 and was fourth in 1981.

The queen of Chinese chess is Miss Xie Si Ming of Beijing. Born in 1962, she won the All-China championship for women starting in 1980 at the age of 18 and has continued to win it almost every year since. She was the first to be awarded the title of Woman's Grandmaster of Chinese chess and is also the only woman who is regarded as a master strength player on the men's standard. If that is true, then she is in the top forty players in China and therefore in the top forty in the world. This makes her comparably better than any woman player of international chess, with the possible exception of Judy Polgar.

Miss Xie is the only really strong player in China who is also a fluent speaker of English. This, her attractiveness and charming personality make her one of the most

popular persons in Chinese chess. She is a celebrity in China. Her name is known to almost all Chinese.

However, like Hu Long Hua, Miss Xie (whose name is pronounced something like the English word 'she') can no longer rest securely even at the top of women's Chinese chess. She has lost some matches recently. There are a whole bunch of good looking teen-age Chinese girls who are on the way up. Meanwhile, Miss Xie Si Ming has dropped out of sight.

There is a tendency to assume that the Chinese do not measure up to Western standards. However, Xie Jun, a unrated 18-year-old Chinese girl, showed up at the 1988 World Chess Olympiad and scored 10 out of 13 against some of the strongest women in the world. The first edition of this book stated that there was no question that Xie Jun was easily one of the ten best female players in the world in international chess. This was a surprising statement at that time which nobody believed, since Miss Xie was unknown and did not even have a FIDE rating.

Since then, Miss Xie has won the World's Woman Chess Championship, easily crushing Maya Chiburdanidze, who was previously considered unbeatable. However, that is only the beginning. Miss Xie's reign at the top is likely to be short, because there is another one, Qin Kai Ying, 17 years old from Shanghai, who is now playing at near to the 2500 level and has qualified for the woman's candidates finals, along with two other Chinese

girls, Wang Pin, 17, and Peng Zhao Qin, 23.

There is every reason to believe that these Chinese women will monopolize the woman's world championship for many years to come. Significantly, they had taken up international chess just a few years earlier, after they had tried and failed to reach the top levels of women's Chinese chess. Imagine what would happen if some of the **strong** young players of Chinese chess took up international chess.

One of the top officials of Chinese chess is Liu Guo Bin of Beijing. During the cultural revolution, Chinese chess was essentially banned. The purpose and intent of the cultural revolution was to uproot and exterminate all vestiges of ancient Chinese culture. Chinese chess was clearly part of that culture. These were dangerous times for men like Liu Guo Bin. It is said that he hid the ancient manuscripts of Chinese chess in the basement of his house in order to keep them and his family from being destroyed during the cultural revolution. I once asked him what he did during the cultural revolution. He said that he played Chinese chess, but very secretly.

For this bravery, he has now been rewarded by being made a top official of Chinese chess. He is also a prominent personality and appears on national television in China in connection with Chinese chess.

Above Mr. Liu Guo Bin is Mr. Chen Zu De, who is a sports official, not a chess official. Chen Zu De, born in

1943, was the All-China Champion many times of the game of go, known in China as *wei-chi*. He is ranked as a 9-dan go player.

Outside of China, Chinese chess is less well organized. It seems that in every major city in the world, there are two clubs or groups of Chinese chess, and they are always fighting with each other. This conforms to the Chinese system of disorderliness.

There are so many important personalities in Chinese chess that it is only feasible to mention those who either speak English or who are interested in attracting non-Chinese to the game.

At the top of the list is Mr. Henry Fok, who is believed by many to be the richest Chinese in the world. In addition to owning a major portion of Hong Kong, he has an interest in Macao gambling casinos, among his other holdings. His name in Chinese is Huo Ying Dong (Mandarin) or Fok Ying Tung (Cantonese). He is the chairman of the Asian Chinese Chess Association. He has offered a prize of a half million dollars to the first non-Chinese person to win a tournament of Chinese chess ahead of a Chinese grandmaster. He sponsored a match of China against the Rest-of-Asia, which China easily won. He is an important personality in other sports as well, including football. His name is known to all Chinese people.

Mr. Paul T. Lam is the Chairman of the newly formed World Chinese Chess Federation. He is also the former

Chairman of the Hong Kong Chinese Chess Association. His Chinese name is Lam Ting Bor. He is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley in Chemistry.

Another millionaire backer and top official of the World Chinese Chess Federation is Mr. Wong Ming. He is one of the strongest players in Hong Kong.

Mr. Leung Lee Shing of Hong Kong is a businessman who is the President of the Hong Kong Chinese Chess Association. He is interested in introducing computers into Chinese chess and in attracting Westerners to the game. He also strongly encouraged me to write this book.

Another prominent personality in Hong Kong is Lee Chee Hoi, born in 1928. Once one of the game's strongest players, he is now a leading organizer and official.

One of the most active persons internationally is Mr. Chen Lo Ping of Manila, Philippines. He was one of the founders of the Asian Chinese Chess Association in 1978 and has served as its long time secretary. He is very interested in introducing Westerners to Chinese chess.

Mr. Chan Fok Loi is the active and energetic Secretary General of the Asian Chinese Chess Association. He is also the President of the Singapore Chinese Chess Association. Remarkably, this organization has been in existence since 1934! His predecessor, Robert Looi, has traveled the world in his efforts to stir up interest by persons of other cultures in the game.

In Taiwan, the leading personalities in Chinese chess

are Mr. You and Mr. Lim Yi She. Unfortunately, they do not speak English. Wu Gui Lin is the best player.

Surprisingly, the third strongest country in the world in Chinese chess seems to be Thailand, behind China and Taiwan but possibly ahead of Hong Kong and Singapore. The national champion and organization president is Chen Su Fei. The principal organizer is Chen I Ping. However, the best player is said to be Sei Kai Jo, who is not a member of the principal organization, or perhaps Liu Po Liang. The name of Sei Kai Jo in the Thai language is Sanguan Jiakiangkai. He finished a clear second in the Seven Stars Cup International Chinese Chess tournament held in October, 1988 in Beijing. However, Liu Po Liang also has a good case. He played fourth board for Asia in the China against the Rest-of-Asia match held in Singapore and got a draw with Liu Da Hua.

Europe, America and Canada are far below the standard of Asia in Chinese chess. At the 1988 Seven Stars Cup tournament in Beijing, most of the bottom places were taken by players from Europe. I beat Lee Chi Gong, the U.K. representative. (I was the only non-Chinese there). The president of the English Chinese Chess Association is Dr. M. Chandler. The chief organizer is Lee Chi Gong. The president of the German Chinese Chess Association is Rainer Schmidt. In France, there is Li Hong Da.

The best player in New York is now Gong Fan, the former Beijing Junior Champion, who assisted in the

preparation of the first edition of this book, and who immigrated from Beijing to America in 1990 with the assistance of this author. Probably number two is Chien Chi, a boat person from Viet Nam. They play at a 24-hour Chinese chess club in New York's Chinatown. In San Francisco, the best player is either Yan Tat Sun, a businessman, or Ng Hak Lok, from Hong Kong.

The most energetic and enthusiastic organizer of Chinese chess in America is Frank C. Eng of San Francisco. Mr. Eng has this wonderful talent and ability which few players of Chinese chess have, which is that he is able to teach the game in fluent English. However, nobody there has ever heard of Frank C. Eng. His name in Cantonese is Wu Chi Gong. (See page 174 for his address.)

There are active communities of Chinese chess in Los Angeles, Vancouver and Toronto. Yu Chou Jen, Li Chung and Leong Chick are regarded as the best players in Vancouver.

The best Japanese national is Akihiro Tanaka. He was born in Beijing, China, but was able to emigrate to Japan when he was twenty because his mother is Japanese. His Chinese name is Chen Zu Jong Haw. However, he is not even in the top ten in Japan. In the 16 years that the Japan National Championship of Chinese chess has been held, no Japanese has ever won. The best player is Mr. Go, from China. The chief organizer and official in Japan is Einosuke Fujio. However, the President of the Japan

Chinese Chess Association is much more famous as the President of the Japan Shogi Association. He is Mr. Oyama, the veteran grand champion of Japanese chess.

In Indonesia, the leading Chinese chess organizer is Tanama. The best player in Indonesia, and very likely the best player in the world who was not born in China, is Yu Chong Ming. (His Indonesian name is Ivan Minarta). In Brunei, there is Sung Pak Leong. In Malaysia, there is Tan Koong Hean. The best player in Macau is Li Jin Huan.

Finally, there is Mr. K.K. Chan of Malaysia, who lives in Hong Kong. He is a developer of computer software for Novag Computers, which is marketing a Chinese chess computer, and also for Mr. Leung Lee Shing of the Hong Kong Chinese Chess Association, who is developing a data base and electronic demonstration board system.

A few years ago, the standard of Chinese chess inside China was so advanced as compared with the standard outside of China that the outsiders had no chance in any serious contest. It was one of the highest compliments to say, "That player is so strong that even Hu Long Hua cannot give him a handicap of more than two moves."

Now, the gap has narrowed. One reason for this is that previously there were not enough books and the players inside China knew lots of opening traps and tricks which had not been published. Now, there are many books and the players outside of China are studying hard to catch up.

Chapter Thirteen

History of Chinese Chess

There are two ancient Chinese writings pertai*shiang-chi*, as Chinese chess is called, dating bac ing to than two thousand years. These we will call 'A' and more 'B'.

A = 菎蔽象棋，有六簙些 《楚辭・招

B = 足下燕居則 鬬象棋而舞鄭女 《說

'A' is from a collection of poems known as *C u Chi.* The author was named Chii Yuan. He was th famous writer in the Chou Dynasty (1046–255 B. most killed himself by jumping into a lake. 'B' is from a book of philosophy known as *Shuo Yuan*, which ci amous It is from the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 221 A.D. d 'A'. are well known to any student of Chinese literature. Both

You will observe that both of them cont Chinese characters for shiang-chi, namely: 象棋 n the

The words *shiang-chi* mean, literally, 'elephant as opposed to another Chinese game, *wei-chi* (go) game', means 'surround game'. No doubt, many reade which have a knowledge of Chinese will strenuously o s who the spellings which are used in this book. In the ect to Pinyin

spelling system, what here is call *shiang-chi* is spelled *xiangqi* and in the older Wade-Giles system it is spelled *hsiang-ch'i*. However, while those spellings are doubtless more widely accepted and technically correct, the average English language reader will have no idea how to pronounce a word spelled either *xiang* or *hsiang* but will easily be able to pronounce *shiang*.

Now, the question is: Does this use of the Chinese characters for *shiang-chi* refer to Chinese chess, or does it refer to another game or perhaps to something else entirely? If we can prove that it refers to Chinese chess, we have just proven that chess is a much older game than has previously been believed and that it was probably invented in China, not in India.

Nobody seriously contends that the game played in the Chou Dynasty is the same game which we now know as Chinese chess, although the name is the same. However, the possibility exists that it might be a direct ancestor. Absent a major archaeological discovery, nobody will ever know the exact truth about this subject. Still, a number of Chinese scholars and researchers are trying to find out.

Part of the problem is that the Chinese are great inventors of games. Today we know about games like *mah-jong, wei-chi*, dominoes and even a game known in the West as 'Chinese checkers', which is still popular in China. All of these games were invented by the Chinese. It seems that many more board games have appeared and

disappeared over the centuries in China. Nobody knows the exact rules of these games or how they were played.

The leading authorities on the subject of Chinese chess history include Chen Chien Ching of Singapore and Yang Guan Lin, a Chinese grandmaster. The current best thinking is that the game of *shiang-chi* played in the Chou Dynasty was a board game with only four pieces and was not recognizable as chess. In other words, it did not have the element of 'checkmate', which every chess-type game, by definition, must have. However, by the Tong Dynasty, in around 800 A.D., *shiang-chi* had evolved into a game substantially similar to the game we have today. It was also during this exact period that Buddhism spread from India to China. Consequently, there was a cultural interchange. It could be that chess came to China from India and simply usurped the name *shiang-chi*, which had previously been the Chinese name for some other board game. It could also be that the game traveled the other way and that the Chinese name *shiang-chi* was revised to the Indian *chaturanga*. However, there is no proof in either India or China for either one of these two theories.

Some sources give the 8th or 9th century as the date of the introduction of the cannon, the last major innovation in Chinese chess. Others say that the cannon was invented around the year 1200. Most sources agree that the same game as played today was played during the latter part of the Song Dynasty (960–1279 A.D.). It is generally

regarded as a proven fact that Chinese chess as we know it existed by at least the twelfth century. The oldest books and actual game scores come from the Ming Dynasty, around 1500 A.D.

Interestingly, this conforms almost exactly to the history of international chess in Europe. The oldest book on international chess was published in 1497 in Italy. The oldest game in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Chess Games* is dated 1490. However, that game does not obey the legal rules of modern chess.

A popular book on sale in China has this to say about chess history: "Chinese chess is one of the traditional cultures. It has a long, long history. A long, long time ago before 2300 years ago the history books have already written the words *shiang-chi*. But at that time the chess pieces were made of ivory, also called *liu bo chi*. The modern chess reached its present form around the end of the Song Dynasty. There was one famous poet. Her name was Li Ching Zhou. She wrote one book entitled *Hitting Horse Picture*. Already the chess board then was the same as now. At that time, the chess pieces also had the same names as now. When we open the coffins from the Song Dynasty, we find the same names and number of the pieces." (*Teach You How To Play Chess* by Chang Ching Ming, Beijing, 1988, ISBN 7-5007-0395-3, p. 1.)

One significant point which is not readily apparent about the above quote concerns the use of the term *liu bo chi*. This is believed to have once been an alternative name for *shiang-chi*. One occasionally hears that Chinese chess was at some point either a six sided or a three sided game. The reason for this is the word *liu* means 'six' and *liu bo chi* can be translated to mean 'six sided game'.

There is a children's game known in the West as 'Chinese checkers' and, in fact, is a six sided game. The Chinese call that game *tiao chi*, but it is not a chess-type game nor is it a game of the checkers variety.

It is probably a mistake to conclude that there ever was a six sided or a three sided version of chess. *Liu bo chi* was simply the name of the game. Problems like this always arise in the Chinese language. Every Chinese character has several different possible meanings.

Another factor which causes uncertainty on this entire subject is that ancient references to games like *shiang-chi* also contain references to astrology. The Chinese sometimes seem to connect chess to astrology. Another game more clearly connected with astrology is Chinese dominoes (*pai gow* and *tin gow*), which have combinations of red and white dots. Finally, it has been suggested that because the word *shiang* means 'elephant', the term *shiang-chi* when used 2000 years ago merely referred to a piece of elephant's tusk. It might just mean that the game itself, whatever it was, was played with pieces of ivory.

Liu Guo Bin of Beijing is regarded as one of the authorities on the history of Chinese chess. He personally

was the guardian of some of the historical Chinese manuscripts which were otherwise believed to have been destroyed during the cultural revolution. He says that a predecessor form of chess did exist in China in the first centuries B.C. but that the exact game which we play today has been played for only about the last 500 years. He also says that chess came from India. The interesting thing is that these assertions are mutually exclusive. Chess did not exist in India until the seventh or eighth century A.D. (if then) and so, if it existed in China in one hundred B. C., it must have been invented there.

Any person who cannot read Chinese will have difficulties discussing this subject. There is a different approach which does not require any specialized knowledge of language. We can follow the method of comparative linguistics and try to reach conclusions about the history of Chinese chess, and of chess in general, by examining the other forms of chess which are popular today.

Other Varieties of Chess

These are a total of six known varieties of the game of chess which are popular and regularly played in the world today. These are international chess, Chinese chess, Japanese chess, Thai chess, Indian chess and Korean chess. Of course, people are always inventing chess type games, taking out patents on them, and trying to get others to play, but the above seems to be a complete list

of chess type games with over a million regular players.

Malaysian chess and Nepalese 'tiger chess' turn out to be merely games of the checker variety. Burmese chess is mentioned in various books, all of which cite H.J.R. Murray as their original source, but this author was unable to find any such game during a brief visit to Rangoon and Mandalay. Burma recently joined the World Chess Federation and the members of the Burmese national chess team are also unaware of any such game. Another game called 'Malay chess' by H.J.R. Murray is simply Thai chess by another name. It is still possible that Burmese chess or some other form of chess exists which is not on the above list. However, Robert Looi of Singapore has conducted a world tour looking for other members of the chess family of games besides those six mentioned above, and has been unable to find any.

All of these six varieties of chess have certain fundamental elements in common. All have two opposing armies which consist of a king in the center, rooks in the corners, knights next to the rooks and a bishop type piece next to the knights. All have pawns in front. In all cases, the game ends by checkmate.

In view of these similarities, the differences are minor. The boards are all about the same size. International, Indian and Thai chess all use a board of 8x8 squares. Japanese chess uses 9x9 squares. Chinese and Korean chess use 9x10 points. Actually, the difference is even less

than that. If you look at a Chinese chess board, you will see that it contains 64 squares. All the Chinese did was add a river in the middle (like a crease in the board) and move the pieces from the squares to the points.

By examining the different varieties of chess, we can reach conclusions about how the game must have evolved. We can follow somewhat the same process by which linguists divide languages into families and groups and conclude how they evolved and separated from each other.

At the starting point, we have a game called *chaturanga*. This is supposed to have been the original form of chess. It is said to have come from India. The reason we know about chaturanga is that this is the game which the Arabs brought with them when they spread Islam. When those Arab armies galloped across North Africa, conquered Spain and penetrated into France, finally losing in battle in Tours, France in 732 A.D., they were not only bringing a religion; they were also bearing a game. That game was chess. The Arabs called it 'shatranj'. However, the Arabs had only acquired chess a few years earlier.

The leading authority in the Arab world on chess history is Mohammad Succar of Beirut, Lebanon. He has read all of the original Arab and Persian manuscripts which mention chess. He says that the Arabs got chess after they took Iran, then known as Pars, in 642 A.D. Others give a slightly later date. In any event, it is agreed that the Arabs had acquired chess by the Omayad period

and at the latest they got it shortly after the death of Ali, one of the four original companions of the Prophet.

After that, Spain became an Arab country and remained so until 1492, when the Moors were finally driven out. For that reason, we have a lot of old Arab manuscripts about chess. Many, if not most, of these were actually written in Spain. The Spanish word for 'bishop' is still 'alfil', which means 'the elephant' in Arabic.

The rules for chaturanga, which the Spaniards continued to play, were: the rook moved like a rook, the knight moved like a knight, and the king moved like a king. Significantly, the bishop jumped exactly two squares diagonally, just like the bishop in Chinese chess. Also, the queen moved exactly one square diagonally, just like the guard in Chinese chess. The only difference besides the cannon between Chinese chess and chaturanga was that in Chinese chess, the bishop cannot cross the river and the guard cannot leave the palace. These ideas are purely Chinese. In historical China, the king and his guards could also not leave the palace.

The nature of international chess was radically changed when the Italians gave the queen and the bishop their present powers. This happened in 1497. We can be surprisingly certain about that date. The reason we know this is that people were writing about the old kind of chess until just a few years before 1497. However, as soon as the new kind of chess started to be played, the old kind

of chess completely disappeared and was forgotten.

The important thing is that chaturanga was just half way between what we now call international chess and Chinese chess. We also know that chaturanga is very old. Therefore, it follows that chaturanga was probably the parent of both Chinese chess and international chess. The other possibility is that the evolutionary chain was somewhat longer and that chaturanga itself had a parent, perhaps that game, whatever it was, that was played in China in the first centuries B.C.

We can get more information about this by looking at the other forms of chess.

Korean Chess

Korean chess should be of great interest to the Chinese because it is almost exactly the same as Chinese chess. The board is almost the same. It even has a palace. The Chinese characters used are similar. If you do not know what to look for, you cannot even tell the difference between the two games.

Visually, the biggest difference is that Korean chess uses octagonal (eight sided) pieces and, instead of red, the pieces are green. In Chinese chess, the pieces are round. The biggest difference in the game is that the elephant in Korean chess does not move like a bishop at all. Rather, it moves like a giant knight. Its move is one forward and two diagonally, whereas the knight moves one forward

and one diagonally.

In addition, the position of the knight and the elephant are reversed by each player on one side of the board. If you will look at the board, you will see the reason for this. Otherwise, both the elephants would have no legal move in the initial position, because they would both run into either a center or an edge pawn. The elephant turns out to be a weak piece. In fact, one of the main strategic objectives is to exchange an elephant for a guard.

Other differences are that the cannon not only captures by jumping, but it also has to jump to move. It cannot jump over or capture another cannon. Consequently, in the initial position, the cannon has no legal move. Also, there is no promotion. The pawns move one forward or one sideways from the start. There is also no river. The lines extend directly across the board. The kings and guards can move freely along the lines in the palace. They have exactly the same move. However, the king starts in a somewhat more exposed position, one point forward from its initial position in Chinese chess.

Indian Chess

Indian chess is almost the same as international chess. The main differences are: The pawns can only move one square on the first move, not two. There is no castling. A pawn promotes to the piece of the file on which it promotes, if that piece is available. Two queens or three rooks for one side are not allowed.

Sometimes it is said about the great master of the 1930's, Sultan Khan, that he became one of the best chess players in the world, even defeating the world champion, Alekhine, while still a beginner at international chess, because he was a master of Indian chess. This seems less of an accomplishment when one realizes that Indian chess is almost the same as international chess.

The interesting question about Indian chess is: Where does it sit on the evolutionary tree? Perhaps the British brought it when they conquered India, and the Indians simplified the game. Perhaps, it came straight down from chaturanga, but the Indians modified it, introducing the queen and the bishop, following the European example.

Japanese Chess

The Japanese have done the same thing with chess that they have done with everything else, which is that after getting it from somewhere else, they have changed it and made it into just about the most fiendishly complex game which normal human beings would still be interested in playing. The Japanese word for chess is *shogi*.

The Japanese really went wild over this, developing all different kinds of shogi games on all sizes of boards, the biggest of which had a 25x25 board and 354 pieces. These games had names like *big shogi*, *small shogi*, *middle shogi* and *great great shogi* and pieces like the *phoenix*, the *drunk elephant* and the *blind tiger*. (Spain also went through a

similar but less radical period, with a *griffin* and other mythical animals for pieces).

In the end, shogi pieces became weaker but more aggressive, tending to lose the capacity to move backwards. The rook became a lance, which can only move forward. The knight also can move only in a forward direction, and thus has only two legal moves. The bishop became a silver general, which can move exactly one square diagonally or one square straight forward. The queen type piece, equivalent to the guard in Chinese chess, became the gold general, which moves one square in any direction except for diagonally backwards. Like the guard in Chinese chess, there are two gold generals in Japanese chess because the board is nine squares wide.

Around 500 years ago, Europeans came to Japan. While unsuccessful in getting them to change their religion, they did manage to convince the Japanese to adopt European features in chess. They reintroduced the rook and introduced the European bishop. These new pieces were placed on the second rank, in front of the other pieces. The pawns are on the third rank.

The main difference between shogi and other kinds of chess is that a piece, when captured, is not out of the game. It becomes part of the enemy's army and can be dropped back into the game on the players turn to move on almost any square of the board. It is this feature which makes shogi the most complex of all chess type games.

Secondly, almost every kind of piece can promote to a stronger piece. Promotion takes place upon passing through the opponent's first, second or third rank. The rook promotes to a dragon, the bishop to a horse and the pawns and other pieces to a gold general.

Thai Chess

Millions of tourists pass through Thailand every year, failing to notice the game which is being played almost everywhere on the street. Thai chess, known in Thailand as *makrook Thai*, has such a wide following that move by move commentary of the big matches is given on the nightly television news, something which cannot be said about any other type of chess in any country. The national championship finals are held in a sports stadium, to accommodate all the spectators, and the games are displayed using giant pieces. This author competed in the national championship of makrook Thai in 1990. He got his photograph published on the front page of most of the newspapers in Bangkok as a result.

The Thais have their own style of pieces. All of them are shaped like a Buddhist pagoda of various sizes, except for the knight, which is shaped like a giant horse. However, Thai chess could be played with the same board and pieces as international chess, except for the pawns, which must be turned upside down when promoted.

Thai chess is half way between chaturanga and shogi.

The board is 8x8 uncheckered squares. The r[oo]k, knight and king moves exactly the same as in internat[ional] chess. However, the queen moves only one square [di]agonally, just like in chaturanga. More importantly, th[e] Thai chess moves just like the silver general i[n] bishop in chess. The pawns also start on the third rank, j[ust] Japanese chess, and promote upon rea[ching] st like in opponent's third rank, again just like in Japa[nese] ing the However, a pawn can only promote to a quee[n] se chess. the weakest piece in Thai chess. The pawn is [sh]aped which is a bottle-cap and is promoted by being tur[ned] ped like down. In the starting position, the king faces th[e] upside queen across the board. [op]posing

The similarities between makrook Thai and [sh]ogi have led researchers to conclude that chess must h[ave] passed through Thailand before reaching Japan. This [me]ans that Thai chess must be very old, because it is be[liev]ed that chess existed in Japan by at least the year 1030 [A.]D. Thai chess resembles chaturanga and may be the or[igin]al form of the game. However, the Thais themselve[s] have no recorded history of their game and seem to be[lie]ve that it is only a few hundred years old. Although Thai [Bu]ddhism (Hinayana branch) is different from Japanese [Bu]ddhism (Mahayana branch), it is possible that chess w[as] brought from Thailand to Japan by Buddhist monks.

Because Thai chess is similar to internationa[l ch]ess, the best Thai chess players are also strong at in[ter]national

chess. The best player of Thai chess is Suchart Chaivichit, who has held a FIDE rating as high as 2420. For years, he made his living as a street hustler of Thai chess and was completely illiterate. Recently, some public officials decided that it was unseemly to have a national figure living like that, so they taught him how to sign his name and got him a respectable job working for the electricity company. In spite of still being illiterate, Suchart got a gold medal for his 88.9% result at the 1988 World Chess Olympiad in Thessaloniki, Greece. He had the best percentage score of any male player in the 107 nation event.

Taking the above information and following the method of comparative linguistics, we can say that there once was a game we shall call *proto-chess*. It had a piece that moved like a rook, another piece that moved like a knight, plus a king-type piece, a bishop-type piece and pawns. The object of the game was to checkmate the enemy king. This method does not provide us with any information about when or where the game was first played. It does, however, tell us that all chess-type games which exist in the world today are direct descendants from that original game. We can also say that any game, past or present, which does not contain those basic elements is not chess, and, on the other hand, any game which does contain all of those elements, is chess. Any element, such as the knight, which exists in all modern chess-type games, must have existed in that proto-chess. On the other hand,

any feature which exists only in one or two of the modern games, such as the cannon in Chinese chess or the queen in international chess, was most likely a new invention, or what linguists call an 'innovation'.

From the above, we can construct a family tree. We can see that the original proto-chess, chaturanga or perhaps some other earlier game that we don't know about, branched into three directions. One direction became international chess and Indian chess, the second became Chinese chess and Korean chess and the third became Thai chess and Japanese chess.

I should caution the reader that this is just a theory. Even the method of comparative linguistics still is just a theory. The idea that a game like chess evolved and developed in much the same way that the Indo-European family of languages evolved must be regarded as just this author's own opinion and idea, and nothing more.

The above is just an outline of a subject which requires deeper study. A great deal of misinformation has been inflicted upon the public about the subject of chess history. For example, it is almost certainly not true that the original form of chess was a four-handed game. That was a crackpot theory propounded by a British writer named Forbes in his 1860 book *The History of Chess*. It has been dismissed by every serious scholar who has ever considered the subject. Still, a high percentage of all chess players today believe it. The theory is based on the fact

that the word *chatur* means four. Therefore *chaturanga* might mean four armies. However, we have the word chaturanga from Arab sources and it seems to be a corruption or mispronunciation of the Arab word *shatranj*. In almost every language, the word for chess starts with a 'sh' or 'ch' sound. These include Chinese (*shiang-chi*), Japanese (*shogi*), Russian (*shakmaty*), Arabic (*shatranj*) and German (*Schach*). This provides linguistic proof that all of these games came from the same common source.

The two worst books ever inflicted on the history of chess were: *A History of Chess* and *A Short History of Chess*, both by H.J.R. Murray, another British author. The last of these books was written in 1917, when a form of romantic semi-scholarship was popular in England. The style of the day was to present the writer's ideas of what might possibly have happened as facts which did happen.

For example, Murray cites two early Sanskrit works which he says mention chess. These are *Harshacharita* by Bana and *Vasavadatta* by Subhandu. These works are studied by every Indian school boy. Modern translations show that neither of these great epic works contain even the remotest reference to a game resembling chess. Similarly, Murray cites the *Karnamak*, a Persian work from about the 7th century which he says deals with chess. Murray makes it sound like he actually sat down and read this work himself. In fact, the *Karnamak* is one of the famous lost books of history. Nobody has seen it for the

last one thousand years. If they ever do find it, it will be one of the world's oldest surviving literary works. In addition, Arab scholars who have studied the original works of an Arab philosopher named Al-Beruni say that Murray is not correct when he states that Al-Beruni described chess being played in India in the year 1030. Unfortunately, almost every chess author since Murray has just copied and repeated his mistakes, without bothering to check the sources or doing any original research work. Indian Sanskrit scholars have expressed surprise at Murray's statement that chess was invented in India. The *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta, June, 1938, Vol. 14, No. 2, part I, p. 275, in an article by C. Chakravarti, concluded: 'No early Indian work on the subject of chess is known'.

The fact is that Murray was nothing more than an elementary school teacher, with no qualifications as a professional historian. Only one real historian has tackled this subject. That was Richard G. Eales, in his 1985 work *Chess: The History of a Game*. Eales refuted point by point almost every word written by Murray, while at the same time giving Murray full credit for at least trying hard during a period when the great historical works in Persian and Sanskrit were just starting to be translated into English. However, Eales clearly did not know the rules of Chinese chess and therefore was unable to recognize the contribution of the Chinese to the modern form of chess.

Eales followed Golombek, who dismissed Chinese

chess as 'the Chinese river game' and said that it was unrelated to chess. Referring to the ancient Chinese manuscripts, Golombek said that, 'They refer to the Chinese riverside game of chess, which is in fact not chess as we know it'. See Golombek, *Chess, A History*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1976, p. 10. It is clear that Golombek, an honorary grandmaster of chess, never learned the rules of Chinese chess. Otherwise, he could not have failed to have recognized that chess and Chinese chess are really different variations of the same game.

The book by Eales demonstrates why so little has been published on chess history and why most chess players are not aware that Murray's theories have been refuted and are considered baseless. In spite of being an excellent work, *Chess: The History of a Game* is now out of print.

Murray's books state that chess was invented by one man named Shasha, after whom 'chess' was named. Shasha lived in a part of India which is now in Pakistan. Murray gives the place of invention of chess as Sind, which is a province of Pakistan. The story which made Murray famous is that Shasha asked, as a reward, that, starting from one, grains of corn be doubled and placed on each successive square the chess board. That story originated from H. J. Raverty, who first published it in an article entitled 'History of Chess and Backgammon', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. 71, Part I, p. 47, Calcutta 1902. Raverty was a British army officer

who had served in Afghanistan and who wrote the *Pashtu-English Dictionary*. Pashtu is a language spoken in Afghanistan and in Peshawar in Northwest Pakistan. Thus, Murray would have us believe that the Pathan desert tribesmen of Afghanistan invented chess.

Murray did not invent the theory that chess comes from India. That idea has always existed, even in China and Arabia. It is based on the fact that in most languages, the third chess piece from the corner is called the 'elephant'. Exceptions include English, where it is called the 'bishop', and French, where it is called the 'fool'. In Chinese, even the name *shiang-chi* means *elephant game*.

However, the Arabs also had elephants. The Chinese also had elephants in their history. On the other hand, the Indians did not have horses, another chess piece. Horses exist in India, but in such small numbers that they were not normally used for war. Chariots were not common in India. Horses exist in northern China in large numbers.

More importantly, we saw from the quotes in the first page of this chapter that the term *shiang-chi* or 'elephant game' existed in Chinese 2300 years ago. Although that game was probably not what we would now call chess, it was also presumably not a game from India. The fact that the word for elephant appears in almost every version of chess which exists anywhere in the world might just as easily prove that these games are all descended from that original 'elephant game' played in China.

Chapter Fourteen

Where to Play, Computer Software, and Other Things You Need to Know.

How to Find an Opponent

One of the easiest things in the world to do is to find an opponent at Chinese chess. Just go into any Chinese restaurant and ask the waiter to play a game with you. Don't laugh. You have to take these games seriously. It will be some time before you can beat even the average Chinese waiter, and, when you can finally do that, you will almost be to the level of some of the best non-Chinese players of Chinese chess. At a recent international tournament in Beijing, the room boys working in the hotel were almost as strong as some of the weaker players.

If you ever do learn enough to defeat the average waiter, the next level is the old men on the street. Just go out and buy yourself a Chinese chess set. Then sit down on the sidewalk in any Chinese city. It can be guaranteed that within thirty seconds an opponent will materialize. Your new opponent will not be so easy to beat. Remember that he has probably been playing chess on that very sidewalk every day for the last forty years. A large crowd will invariably gather around the game and make comments on the moves. Whenever you see a crowd gathered on the street anywhere inside China, you can bet that there is a game of Chinese chess being played at the center of the crowd.

Be sure to carry your own set with you at all times. There is always a shortage of sets. Since you will be weaker than most Chinese, nobody is going to be willing to let you play on somebody else's set, especially when there are stronger players than you waiting to play. The way I learned how to play, incidentally, is that I took several long distance railroad trips across China, carrying my own set. Even though almost all of the other passengers were too strong for me, they had no choice but to play against me anyway, because I was the owner of one of the sets and there was nothing else to do.

When you are carrying your own pocket set, do not be surprised if the Chinese ask to borrow it so that they can play with each other. Actually, they will not be much interested in playing with you, until you can prove that you can beat them some of the time. This is one of the advantages in owning your own set. You can insist that if they want to play, they have to play with you.

If you can beat the average sidewalk player, you are ready to graduate to the park. In almost every Chinatown in the world there is a park and Chinese chess is played there. For example, there is Victoria Park in Hong Kong and Portsmorth Park on the corner of Washington and

Kearny Streets in San Francisco. However, now you have hit the big time. Be sure to bring plenty of money with you, because your opponents will want to play for money. The minimum is usually ten dollars a game.

If you can win in the park, you will quickly become rich. However, this is not so easy. Many players there are full-time hustlers of Chinese chess. Before you play anybody for money, try asking what his job is. If he doesn't have one, you may be in for a tough game.

The playing conditions in the park are less than ideal. Tremendous crowds gather around the games. Spectators start shouting suggested moves at the players, like spectators at a boxing match who shout, 'hit him with a right.' Since they will be shouting the suggested moves probably in Cantonese, your opponent will get the benefit of what they say, but not you. Sometimes the spectators will actually reach over and move the pieces.

Finally, there are the clubs. In the clubs outside of China, they play for more money, ranging from forty to one hundred dollars per game. Actually, even if you do find the club, you will at first have trouble getting in the door. They will think that you are from the police and are coming to raid their gambling joint. However, if you can somehow finally convince them that you are actually there to play Chinese chess, you will be welcome.

Most of the players in the clubs will not be able to speak English and will not be much interested in playing

with you unless you come with pockets bulging. However, the clubs have several advantages. Spectators will not shout suggested moves if there is money involved in the game. Also, if you are strong enough actually to win, your opponent will not give up. He will play game after game with you, until he is broke, even if he has no chance of winning. This is the reason that there are so many professional players of Chinese chess outside of China, much more than there are professional players of international chess. If you can win regularly in the clubs, you will become a millionaire. You will not need to bother with the half million dollars Henry Fok is going to give you.

In places like Hong Kong you will sometimes find a dozen or so men lined up, each with a Chinese chess set at his feet with a position set up. These are professional players of Chinese chess. They have a proposition to offer. You can take either side of the position on the board that you want, red or black, and they will play the other side. They are prepared to wager a considerable amount of money that you cannot win or draw, as the case might be, regardless of which side you take. Do not bet with these people. The positions they show might look simple, but actually are so difficult that nobody can solve them who is not familiar with that particular position.

Where to Play Chinese Chess

The following is a list of clubs, contact persons, as-

sociations and federations around the world. It is neither complete nor uniform. The idea is just to help you get in touch with someone who plays Chinese chess wherever you may be. If you can just find one such person, he will generally be able to introduce you to the others.

China: Beijing. The Chinese Xiangqi Association is at the new 'chess palace' or China Qi Yuan, 80 Tiantandong Road, Beijing 100061, China, tel. 86-1-7011618, FAX 86-1-5112294. Officials there include Liu Guo Bin. Go and international chess are also played there. There is also a club in one of the buildings along a western wall inside the Forbidden City. However, mostly go is played there. A master player and noted author in both Chinese chess and international chess is Xu Jia Liang, 8 Tiyuguan Rd, tel. 757161 ext. 261. Also, there is Miss Xie Si Ming, Post Box 687, Beijing Normal University, (408) 629-2606.

Guangzhou (Canton): The club is on Shiamen island by the tennis courts in front of the White Swan Hotel.

Shanghai: Try Hu Long Hua himself. His address is: 4, Lane 591, Nanjing Rd (W.), Shanghai, China, tel. 531267.

Harbin: Wang Jia Liang, Heilongjiang Chess Academy, 19 Heping Road, Harbin, China, tel. 229342 or 229125.

Chengdu: Miss Lin Ye, Sichuan Chengdu Chess School, West Suburn Sports Stadium, Chengdu or Mr. Cai Shao Pu, Manager, Sichuan Sports Committee, 1 Tiyuchang Road, Chengdu, Sichuan, China, tel. 62574.

Lanzhou: Han Kuan, Gansu Province Xiangqi Federation, 72-207 Dunhuang Rd, Lanzhou, tel. 35911 Ext. 2565.

Taiwan (Chinese Taipei): Telephone numbers of the Taiwan Chinese Chess Association are (02) 5533741 and (02) 5536120. Mr. Yu and Mr. Lim are the top officials. The club is located at 34-1 Kung-Yuan Rd, Taipei, tel. 361-6138. By mail, try Johnson Jiang, 4F No. 75 Min-Chuan W. Rd., Taipei.

Hong Kong Chinese Chess Association, Flat E/F, 4/F Wang Cheung Commercial Building, 249-253 Reclamation St., Kowloon, tel. 3-723090. One of the best people to contact is L.S. Leung, 1 Tai Hang Road, 11/A, Hong Kong, tel. (res.) 8902918, (off.) 0-4666813, FAX 0-4563304 or else try Lee Chee Hoi, 20-30 Morrison Hill Road, 15th floor Flat C, tel. 5-723090. The Chairman is Paul T. Lam, tel. 7923691. Other important personalities are Henry Y.T. Fok, Room 500-2 Pedder Bldg., 12 Pedder St., Hong Kong, tel. 5-234944 and 5-227131 and Mr. Wong Ming, 15/F C.M.A. Building, 66 Connaught Rd. Central, Hong Kong, tel. 5-8153683, FAX 852-5-8150012.

Singapore Chinese Chess General Association, 10B, Lor. 10, Geylang, Singapore 1438, tel. 7410989. They are still in the process of moving from their previous address of 21 Tyrwhitt Road #05-07, Foochow Building, Singapore 0820. Tel. 2960767. This is a very enthusiastic organizer of international competitions, with Chan Fok Loi as the president and Cecilia Tay as the secretary. Hu Long Hua, regarded as the 'Bobby Fischer' of Chinese

chess, has recently been there as a chess coach under contract. Also, there is the Beidou Chinese Chess Club. Mr. Lim Kwan How is the president. The address is: 13 Hillview Ave., #24-1416, Singapore 2366, tel. 4590830.

Thailand Xiangqi Association, 76 Trok Pantajit Mytrijit Road, Bangkok 10100, Thailand, tel. 2242808. There is also a rival group, The Tio Chew Association of Thailand, 1/1 Soi Watprok 1 Soi Yenchit Yannawa, Bangkok, tels. 2112803, 2113204 and 2113905. Thailand has a large Chinese community and is perhaps the third strongest country in the world in Chinese chess. The best man to contact is Chen I Ping, 215-217 Sipraya Sap Road, Soi Santipap 1, Bangkok 10100, tel. 2362651 and 2362729. His house is conveniently located near Patpong. An excellent speaker of English is Mr. Lin Tse Wei, 191/78 Soi Chokchai 4 Ladprao Rd., Bangkok, tel. 539-1989.

Japan: Contact Mitsunori Yamada, Niichu Chinese Chess Association, Shimo Igusa 4-1-15, Suginami-ku, Tokyo, Japan, tel. (03) 3399-1592 (home) (03) 3713-7000 (office). Another contact is Mr. Nagata of Yokohama, a professor at Hosei University, who speaks some English. His telephone number is (045) 432-8139.

Indonesia: Percasi Unit Catur Gajah Pusat, Jalan Pejagalan I No. 35C, Jakarta-Barat. The president is Mr. Tanama, tels. 3809742 (off.) and 6394569 (res.). Also try Lim Cin Kiong, Jl. Vikamas Utara 7/25, Villa Kapuk Mas, Jakarta-Utara, tel. 374830.

Malaysia: Malaysia Chinese Chess Assn., 240-Q Jalan Bugis, Pudu, 55100 Kuala Lumpur, tel. 2224224. There is also a club around the corner from the Lido Hotel, on the second floor, near to the YMCA. Also try Persatuan Catur Cina Wilayah Persekutuan, No. 10, 4th floor, Jalan Panggung, 5000 Kuala Lampur, tel. 2321579. One of the officials is Tan Koong Hean, tel. 03-2411000 page 6291 and 03-7754270 (res.). Also, there is John C.C. Chong, tel. 07-630695.

East Malaysia: East Malaysia is located on the island of Borneo, far from mainland Malaysia and nearer to the Philippines. They have their own federation. The address is Persekutan Persatuan Xiangqi Sarawak Dan Sabah, P.O. Box 792, 90008 Sandakan, Sabah, East Malaysia, tel. 2722778 and 666182. Contact Mr. Lau Kiing Ho.

Brunei Chinese Chess Association, P.O. Box 1417, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, tel. 227757. The best man to contact is Sung Pak Leong, a businessman and speaker of English, or Mr. K.C. Chong.

Philippine Federal Chess Enthusiast Association, Inc., Room 219, 945 Gandara St, Manila, tel. 483736. The best person to contact and one of the most energetic and authoritative persons in the world of Chinese chess is Chen Lo Ping, 624 Ongpin St, Manila, tel. 486218, FAX 63-2- 461291. His office was formerly the official address of the Asian Chinese Chess Association, of which he was the secretary.

Macau Chess General Association, 3, Travessa Das Venturas, Macau, tel. 330377. Contact Mr. Kou Peng Koi.

United States of America: San Francisco. Absolutely the best person in America to contact in Frank C. Eng, res. tel. (415) 731-7913. He is the President of the Chinese Chess Association, 153-A Waverly Place, San Francisco, Calif. 94108, tel. (415) 391-1236. He comes to the club every evening at about 5:30 P.M. He is also a member of the organizing committee of the World Chinese Chess Federation. His name in Cantonese is Wu Chi Gong, so ask for him by that name. If you live in America but do not happen to live in San Francisco, he will know someone who plays near where you live.

A newcomer to the scene is James Feinstein, P.O. Box 1305, San Bruno, Calif. 94066, tel. (415) 756-3246 (res.) and (415) 876-0909 (off.). He has a bold plan to make Chinese chess into a favorite pastime for all Americans, and has designed a new kind of set, among other things.

Another personality of note is David Woo. He publishes his own newsletter on Chinese chess. This is perhaps the only English language periodical of Chinese chess in America. One can also contact this author at Sam Sloan, 2420 Atherton St. #6, Berkeley, CA 94704.

New York. Until recently, the club was the Chinese Chess Confederation of Eastern U.S.A., 81 Bowery St., second floor, room 6, New York, New York 10002, tel. (212) 431-8782. However, in 1991, they were abruptly

evicted in a dispute with their landlord and nobody can seem to find them. Some of their members speak English. The best contact person is Edward Ling Fai Chan, formerly of 94-24 46th Ave., Elmhurst, Queens, New York 11373, if only you can find him. Another possibility is to write them at P.O. Box 1079, G.P.O. Brooklyn, N.Y.

Los Angeles. Chinese Chess Association of Los Angeles, 539 East Garvey Avenue, Monterey Park, Calif. 91754.

Miami, Florida. Try Larry Kaufman, 77 Laurel Lane, Parkland, Fla. 33067, tel. (305) 341-4798. Mr. Kaufman can also generally be contacted through the United States Chess Federation in New Windsor, New York.

Washington, D.C. Try Sen Huei Chen, Univ. of Maryland, Math Dept., College Park, Md. 20742.

Canada: Vancouver Chinese Chess Association: Mr. P.H. Ma, 202-37E Pender St., Vancouver, B.C. V6A 1S9, tel. (604) 433-0308. Also Mr. Lawrence Der, 127 East 64th Ave., Vancouver V5X 2M3, tel. (604) 327-4494.

Calgary Chinese Chess Association, Mr. Milton Ang, 8 Varcourt Place Northwest, Calgary, Alberta 73A OG8, tel. (043) 247-6449.

Toronto Chinese Chess Association, 32 Scott Drive, Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4C 4C3, tel. (416) 492-7581.

Edmonton Chinese Chess Association, 34 Sterling Road, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T5X 4C3, tel. (403) 421-0405.

Australia. Try Lei Shou Tie, the director of the Chinese Cultural Center in Melbourne.

German Chinese Chess Association, Mr. Rainer Schmidt, Handjerystr. 58, 1000 Berlin 41, tel. 030/8512168. The German organization seems to be the only one with a significant number of members who are not overseas Chinese. Their most famous member is Dr. Robert Hübner, a sinologist and one of the top fifty rated grandmasters of international chess in the world. David Wurman has written a book on Chinese chess in German.

Hamburg: Sektion Hamburg, Taggstr. 15, D-2213/Wilstr., Germany.

Holland: Nederlandse Xiangqi Bond, c/o Peter Blommers, Tollensstraat 134, 2513 GE Den Haag, Netherlands, tel. 070-604102.

England Chinese Chess Association: Mr. C.K. Lai, 12 Lagan House, Sumner Road, London SE15 5RB. The president is Dr. M. Chandler, 88 Charterhouse Avenue, Sudbury Town, Middlesex, England.

France Chess Club: Amicale des Teochewen, 41, Rue du Disque, (Entree: 66 avenue d'Ivry), 75013 Paris. Mr. Ly Trach Trung, tel. 45-82-0601. Also, Chinese Chess Club of the American Legion, Department of France, 49 Rue Pierre Charron, 75008 Paris, tel. 7214456. Also, Li Hong Da, 231, rue du Fg St-Martin 75010 Paris, tel. 42392226 and 48333686. Also 5, rue Henri Barbusse 93300 Anbervilliers. Also, Association de Xiangqi en

France, c/o Asia Services, 15, Rue Des Freres D'Astier, De La Vigerie, 75013 Paris, France. Also, Rencontre Et Culture Franco- Asiatique, 29, Av De Choisy, 75013 Paris tel. 45861052.

The above list is undoubtedly incomplete, but still is possibly the most complete such list ever assembled.

Computer Software

Since the publication of the first edition of this book, a first class Chinese chess database program has been developed in Taiwan. This program is similar to Chess-Base. It runs on MS-DOS computers. It was used by the Singapore Chinese Chess Association to record all of the games of the 1989 World Cup Chinese Chess Championship. It not only records and saves the games, but it produces a guaranteed accurate score. This program is especially useful because a high percentage of all published games contain errors in the score.

Unfortunately, although this program is commercially available, it can only be obtained in Taiwan. In addition, the only source of information about this program has been Mr. Yu of Taiwan, and Mr. Yu speaks no English. Mr. Yu did bring twenty copies of the program with him to the World Cup Chinese Chess Championships in Singapore, but they were immediately gobbled up by the players, and none more are presently available.

A program of this type has also been commissioned by

Mr. L.S. Leung of the Hong Kong Chinese Chess Association and is being developed by K.K. Chan. However, that program is still in the initial development stages.

Mr. Gong Fan and Mr. Meng Chang Le of Beijing, China have developed a floppy disk containing 124 games of Hu Long Hua. They also have disks for international chess, including one disk each for the best games of Fischer, Kasparov and Karpov. Their Chinese chess disk is excellent for a player at any level. The program runs on CGA or EGA, but not on Hercules. This was perhaps one of the first cases where someone has marketed computer software directly by mail order from the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Gong Fan recently immigrated to the U.S.A., with the assistance of this author, who got him out of China on June 22, 1989. Mr. Gong Fan presently resides in Brooklyn, New York, where he is gainfully employed as a dish washer, but his exact address is unknown.

There are several programs on floppy disk which play Chinese chess. Perhaps the best is Chinese Chessmaster, which comes from Taiwan. The graphics and display are excellent. The program is not terribly strong, but not weak either. It is quite alert to short term tactics. There are probably few non-Chinese who can defeat it. Although I can win almost every game against it, I am angry at myself for not having used it more to prepare for a tournament in Beijing. A few hundred games against that program

would have gotten some of the blunders out of my system which I otherwise played.

Novag Computers, one of the major manufacturers of computer chess games such as the Novag Super Expert, also has a Chinese chess machine. That machine has not been a great success and more than 5000 remain unsold. They have hired Hu Long Hua, who has already provided an openings book of 8000 half moves for the next generation machine.

K.K. Chan, both a programmer and a spokesman for Novag, claims that the Novag Chinese chess machine has been tested and found to be stronger than Chinese Chessmaster. The Novag computer sells for about US$50.

Wang Xiao Run, Guangming General Company, 106 Yong An St., Beijing 100050, tel. 338561 ext. 392, FAX 3016716, has developed computer algorithms for a Chinese chess program with a professor at Nankai University in Tianjin. However, they do not have a working program yet.

Tournament Rules

In Chinese chess tournaments at a high level, the player of the red pieces wins about 50% of the games, with the rest being divided almost equally between draws and losses. Because Red has a big advantage, most tournaments are played under a two game system, although at times a one game system has been used.

The Chinese have picked up another Western idea of using Swiss system tournaments. As the Chinese rating system only covers a few players, they use lottery pairings. Although players with equal scores are paired against each other as much as possible, the exact pairings are drawn by lot. This is much fairer, as pairings by rating tend to give an unfair advantage to the higher rated players. The pairings are made publicly, with the players watching the lots being drawn. In international chess, the pairings are usually made in a secret pairing room.

The time control system follows that developed for go (*wei-chi*). Each player might have one and a half hours to play his game. If his flag falls, he has ten minutes to make the next ten moves. If he fails to make the next ten moves within ten minutes, he loses by forfeit. If he completes the ten moves in time, he continues to play until his flag falls again, when the process is repeated. The players do not keep their own score. Instead, a score keeper writes down the moves. The games are collected and tournament bulletins are published, containing all of the games.

This system can become crazy at times. Sometimes, two matches of two games each are scheduled for one day. This means a total of four games in one day. A game can easily go on for more than one hundred moves. The players might start at ten o'clock in the morning and still be sitting there at six o'clock the next morning.

In international chess, there is a general rule of 'quiet

in the tournament room.' In Chinese chess, it doesn't quite work like that. There is a moderator with a loud speaker or a microphone. He calls out the moves which are displayed on a demonstration board to the audience. If several games are going on at once, each score keeper will save up a few moves at a time and then all the moves will be displayed together. Sometimes, a resident master will give move by move commentary over a microphone, while the players are sitting right there playing the game.

The players don't seem to mind this. Perhaps, they got used to this while playing sidewalk street games on the way to the top. Also, this system has advantages. It makes Chinese chess into a spectator sport. This is the reason that there can easily be a thousand spectators at a contest of Chinese chess, while an equally strong competition of international chess will get almost no spectators.

The results of a competition are determined by match points in two game matches. A win and a draw is just as good as a win and a win. If two players or teams are tied on match points and the tournament is a Swiss, the ties will be broken by the sum of the scores of the player's opponents. After that, game points might be counted. Finally and surprisingly, the number of minutes used in the games are considered for tie-breaking purposes. The player who has played the fastest during the tournament wins on tie-breaks.

Handicap Games

When you are a new player of Chinese chess, you may find that your opponent will offer to give you a handicap when he realizes your actual level. The standard handicaps are one move, two moves, one knight and two knights. Do not be insulted by this. Actually, a master can give a fairly strong player the odds of one knight. Even at odds of two knights, it is not so easy to win. There is a special rule for games at odds of two knights. The player receiving the odds is not allowed to capture the opponent's center pawn unless the pawn has moved or he is giving check. This is because a player without two knights finds it difficult to defend his center pawn.

The player who gives the handicap of one or two knights has a compensating advantage. He does not have to worry about developing his knights, because they don't exist. Therefore, he will be able to bring his rooks out quickly and penetrate with them to the opponent's second rank. He will try to pin the opponent's knight and capture it with the cannon in the manner we saw back in Dia. 68.

If you play at these odds, you will have to develop your knights quickly to stop that from happening. Perhaps you might try moves like N2+1 and N8+9, just putting your knights on the edge of the board for the time being. The danger of this is that your knights will be more or less out of the game for at least a while. Also, your center pawn will be left undefended. However, if you can survive the

opening, you should be able slowly to activate your pieces and win. After that, your opponent will not be willing to offer you odds of two knights any more.

Chinese Terminology

Throughout this book, we have avoided any use of Chinese terminology. There are several reasons for this. The main reason is that it is useless to give the Chinese terminology, because there are so many Chinese dialects.

Until now, we have managed to use only two Chinese chess words in this entire book. These are *xiangqi* or *shiang-chi*, the name of the game, and *fan gong ma*, the name of a popular opening formation. I thought of presenting a list of other well known opening formations, like the *pin fong ma*, but decided against it. In fact, we have not even given the Chinese names for the pieces.

You need to know the word *shiang-chi* because otherwise, when you say *Chinese chess*, most people will think you are talking about go (*wei-chi*). Actually, you need to know two terms, *chunguo shiang-chi*, which means *Chinese chess*, and *guoji shiang-chi* which means *international chess*. The word *guoji* means *international*.

We could have told you that the word for horse or knight is *ma*, the word for cannon is *pao* and the word for bishop or elephant is *shiang*. However, you might have gotten discouraged when you found out that the word for red pawn is different from the word for black pawn. Im-

agine how discouraged you would have been had you been told that after learning the Mandarin words for these things, it was then absolutely necessary for you to learn also the equivalent words in Cantonese, Fukienese and Shanghaiese. We have decided that it is better for you to use your brain power trying to learn how to play the game well, rather than trying to memorize a bunch of terms which you will probably never use.

I tried to write this book using a directory of basic simplified and complex Chinese characters plus their Pinyin pronunciation. It didn't work. If I want to know how to pronounce a man's name, I still have to call him up and ask. Knowing the Chinese characters doesn't help much. The main thing to know about the Pinyin system is that the letter 'x' sounds to English speakers like 'sh', 'q' like 'ch', and 'r' like 'l'. For example, I have called the strongest player in the world 'Hu Long Hua', but he spells his own name 'Hu Rong Hua'. I have tended to call the name for Chinese chess 'shiang-chi', but they spell it 'xiangqi'. On the other hand, I left the spelling of the name of Grandmaster 'Xie Si Ming' the way it is, rather than spell it 'Shie Si Ming'. With this knowledge, you will also be able correctly to pronounce the name of the new Woman's World Chess Champion, whose name is Xie Jun.

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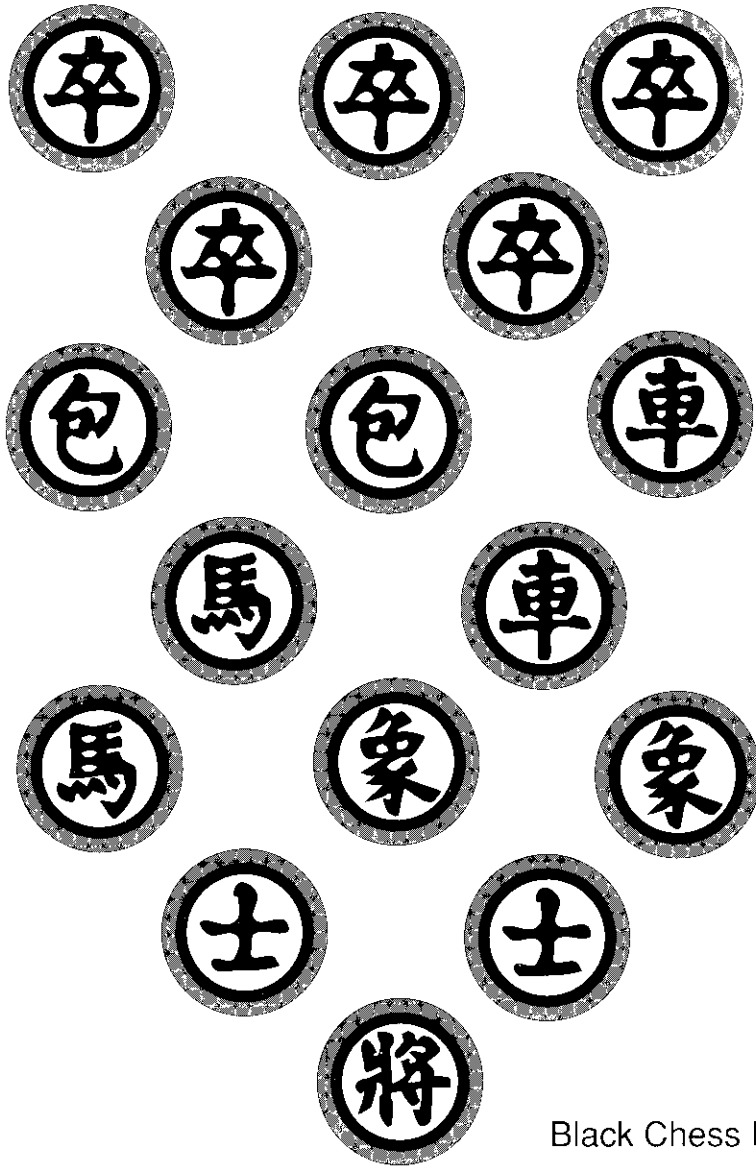
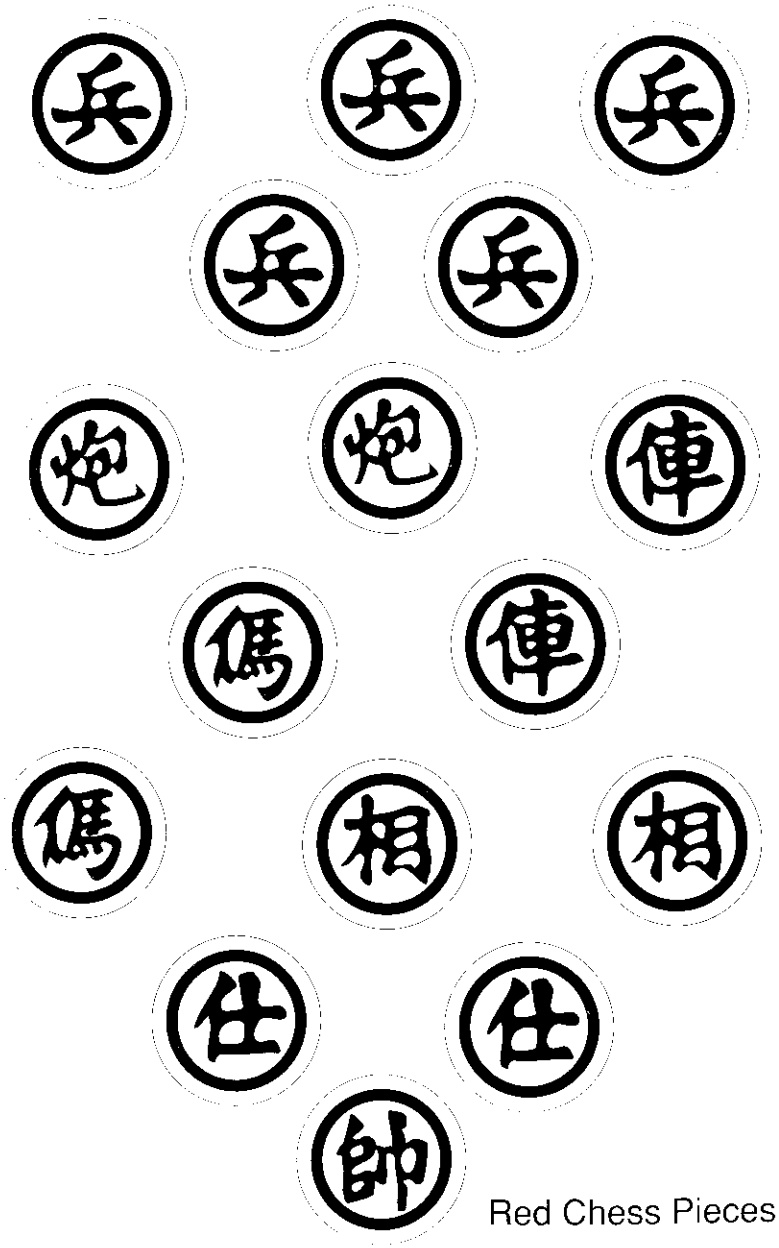


Black Chess Pieces



Red Chess Pieces

When you think of Chess, you probably think of the strategy game played throughout Europe and the Americas. There is another kind of Chess played throughout the world by probably more people than any other strategy game. This game is Chinese Chess. The "Elephant Game," as it is called by the Chinese, dates back more than 2000 years. A cousin of Western Chess, its unique style of play results in a wide-open, quick-moving and aggressive contest.

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About the Author

Sam Sloan is a chessmaster and journalist and holds a "third grade" or expert rating in Chinese Chess. In Beijing he received an award as "First Foreigner in Chinese Chess." He is a member of the Ratings Committee of the World Chinese Chess Federation. A tournament player of international chess since the age of 11, he is well-qualified to explain Chinese Chess to Westerners.

Born in 1944 in Richmond, Virginia, Mr. Sloan has since traveled in 73 countries around the world. He now resides in Abu Dhabi.

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